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# THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION

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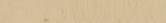

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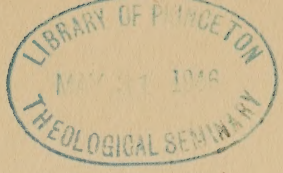


# THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION

FREDERICK C. GRANT

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To George Fisher Hardie

*with admiration and affection*

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## CHAPTER I

# *Why This Book Was Written*

THIS BOOK deals with the practice of religion, but not with all its practices. It deals with religion as expressed in certain of its great characteristic activities, like prayer and the endeavor after righteousness; but it does not undertake to describe the customs, rituals, beliefs, hopes and fears of men. Instead it attempts to set forth in clear and simple terms what religion essentially is, and what its practice means: to explain why the religious man does certain acts, what he is seeking for, where he seeks it, whether or not he finds what he is after, and what are some of his beliefs and hopes, the faith so subtly and inextricably woven into the fabric of his life.

I believe there is need for such a statement at the present time. And I trust that this book is modern, that it sees religion with modern eyes and speaks of it in modern speech. As I see our situation today, the estrangement of many men from religion, their refusal to make open profession of a religious life and convictions, is due to the haunting sense that much of what passes for religion—most men are unable to say just how much—is antiquated, and that its activities presuppose a view of the world which is now as completely outgrown as the Ptolemaic astronomy, the naive biblical account of creation, or the mediaeval view of the family. Modern ideas are assumed by many to invalidate not the Church merely, or the Creed, or the Christian system of ethics, but the whole fundamental view of things which religion takes for granted. Until the real basis of religion is shown to be secure, there

are many who will not be able to appreciate its higher structural elements. Principles come before details of their application, and first principles come before secondary ones. To use an old distinction, the difficulties of today lie within the field of natural religion rather than of revealed. It is mainly with the former that this book attempts to deal.

It may be well to state in advance what this book is *not*. It is not a statement of Christian doctrine, the 'Catholic Faith' set forth in the Creeds and other documents of the Church. Nor is it a history of this doctrine; though both the Faith and its historical development within the Church are taken for granted. Nor is it a defense of that Faith; for I am increasingly convinced that its demonstration in practice is its best defense. Rather, it deals with the more elemental presuppositions of the Christian religion—indeed, to a large extent with the presuppositions of every religion which really appeals to modern men and women. The mind of our generation is turning in this direction once more. Such questions as miracles, inspiration, the authorization of the Church's ministry, the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist or generally in the Church's worship—these belong among what may be called 'secondary' doctrines.[1] As contrasted with the period closing with the nineteenth century, popular interest has certainly swung away from these to the more primary and fundamental subjects of religious faith: the being and nature of God, His character and activity, the possibility and the realization of communion with Him, the bases of Christian ethics, viz. the nature of man and the objective reality of the moral standard, both social and personal, the survival of human personality and eternal life. The Anglican Bishops assembled at Lambeth in 1930—their latest meeting—clearly recognized this fact, and likewise the attendant need for instruction in these basic matters, when they urged upon the clergy of the whole Church (not only the Anglican) the need for more

fundamental doctrinal preaching, and specifically the preaching of the doctrine of God.[2] On all hands one observes signs of a renewed and vital interest in the fundamental postulates of the *religious* life, as contrasted with the merely natural, self-seeking, non-ethically and non-spiritually motivated existence of one of the higher biological species. It is this new element, this fresh, new quality in human existence, this *donum supernaturale* which is nevertheless to be found within the sphere of the natural world, that religion lays hold upon—supremely, the religion of the historic Christian Church. Christianity is essentially and inescapably 'supernaturalistic' in its outlook; yet no genuinely functioning religion in all human history has given fuller recognition to the rights of 'reason' and the native or 'natural' endowments and aspirations of men. It raises to the highest limit the natural capacities of man; and it likewise carries out to its full consequences that belief in a *rational* supernatural which is implicit[3] in all the higher religions of mankind. As contrasted with philosophy, or philosophy of religion—which is often abstruse and critical, and fails to touch the emotions of men, at least of many men —traditional or historic Christianity takes its stand among the *religions* of the earth. But it has never assumed (save among certain of the more extravagant sects) that reason and faith were contrary or opposed processes of the mind; nor has it been content to center its efforts upon another world than this, abandoning the 'natural' world to perdition; nor has it been satisfied with the identification of the Supernatural with some power, grace, or 'other world' standing in clean-cut contrast to the natural. Both belong to the one universe of God, and are (crudely stated) like the two stories of one and the same house; or rather (somewhat better stated) they are like the two aspects from which an individual man may be viewed: a quarter's worth of chemicals, *or* 'the soul of a man in the house of a brute.' Since religion (superlatively,

the religion of Christ) is perennially concerned with this haunting, mysterious, alluring novelty, the Supernatural steadily invading from above and at the same time emerging from within the Natural, it has endless charm and fascination for all minds that are keenly alive and aware of vaster issues to man's rôle upon the earth than the satisfaction of crude biological urges, however conditioned and refined by economic factors or by modern social evolution.[4]

It is my hope that this book may contribute toward the clearer discussion of these basic presuppositions of the religious life. I call it the 'Practice' of Religion; for it seems obvious that current discussion of religion always tends to become academic and abstract, whereas the simple truth is that the only proper approach to religion is from the inside: not with a good cigar and an easy chair after dinner at the club, but upon one's knees! No one can know art, or discuss it intelligently, unless he has at least in some dim measure sensed the creative urge, felt the obstacles in the way, the relatively intractable materials, the limitations and conditions of the task, and has at the same time caught a glimpse of the artist's ideal. Similarly, no one can know philosophy who has not himself wrestled, if only as an amateur, with the huge and vexatious but endlessly fascinating problems of the philosopher. Likewise, no less, the man who would know religion must study it from within, must share its experiences, must himself sense its aspirations and realize its problems; if not, he is like Plato's weavers, studying the pattern forever from the wrong side.

I recall a question put by a student after a public lecture in a series on the Philosophy of Religion: "Why is it necessary to believe in God as *real?* Would it not serve just as well to accept God as an *ideal*?" I have thought of that question many times since, for it seems to me to sum up and to reflect much of the uncertain thinking of our generation—not deeply

affected by the elemental urge of all genuine religion, i.e. for reality, but only for what will function usefully; and yet unable to give up the quest, lured on continually by the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, as Rudolf Otto calls it. As a philosophy (i.e. if it were a philosophy), Christianity might be willing to speculate upon this question; but Christianity is a faith, a worship, a 'way' or practice of religion; and as such —not as a philosophy—it is a quest for final reality, not merely for what is useful to us. Therefore the functional value of its ideal is not the true question, but the truth, the reality, of what is sought—and presumably found—in God. Assume that it does not matter whether the 'ideal' has a correspondent reality, or whether or not it is itself identical with the reality, and its functioning value ceases! Nothing less than, nothing other than, the Supremely Real will ever satisfy the quest to which the worshipper addresses himself. The proper approach to religion, I repeat, is not arm-chair discussion, but practice; and I earnestly hope that anyone reading these words who does not himself know religion from within will no longer delay to take the simple but absolutely necessary first steps in that direction: let him *try it!*

§ i

As I view the contemporary situation, there are many men outside organized Christianity, and even some men nominally within it, who will never be able to grasp the meaning of religion's higher forms until they are sure of the truth and significance of its lower forms. They must first discover in their own experience the meaning and value of the rudiments; and, even prior to this, they must come to believe that religion is possible for the modern man. To speak specifically, they can never be sure of religion at all until three particular points are made clear:

(1) The relation of religion to morality—i.e. are they identical, or inseparable, or entirely distinct? Does 'living a good life' sum up the practice of religion?
(2) The relation of God to a universe of unchanging law and order—i.e. what alterations in our religious views and practices are required by modern science?
(3) The relation of the religious life to the whole of life—i.e. is religion broadening or narrowing in its effects upon the minds of men?

(1) If religion claims to be superior to or outside the realm of morality—it may sound absurd, but there really are religious persons who assume that religion has nothing in common with 'mere ethics'—then there are many who will be quite content to adopt the highest standards of personal morality with which they are familiar; and they will continue to ignore religion as something requiring either a peculiar kind of temperament or certain spiritual gifts of an unusual order, and having no claim upon them. Religion will thus be given the place accorded to art and music by the man who acknowledges he has no taste. But is this a satisfactory settlement of the matter? Are we done with religion when it is thus set in a corner with art and music, as a merely decorative affair without practical utility?

(2) If the relation of God to the universe of energy and law which science has opened up to our wondering gaze is only that of First Cause, or supreme and all-wise Architect, then not only have miracles passed outside the pale of credibility, but religion itself, as the effort to come into personal relationship with the Most High, has become preposterous. We may not greatly regret the first consequence, but the second is utterly fatal. Originally a free God—and such must the Author of all have been, since what conceivably is God if He is not free?—He must now be as completely and hopelessly involved in the natural order as we ourselves are! Its laws, though of His own framing, are irrevocable, unalterable,

inescapable. He can neither change nor override them without disordering the whole creation; in short, without abolishing it, as it now exists. As a matter of simple observation, He does *not* change or override its laws.

But is the true idea of God to be found in such a concept as that of a 'First Cause'? It is scarcely the idea required by practical religion. We may even go further and ask, Does science itself require any such God, impersonal, remote, and arbitrary? And must He be looked upon as 'absolute,' either in the narrowly logical and philosophical sense, or in the wider moral and practical one? All this is to inquire, in fine, Has religion, as a personal relation between God and men, any possible basis in reality?

I believe that our popular idea of the reign of law, which modern science is supposed to have discovered (though men had observed the uniformity of nature long before modern science appeared), is not so much scientific as it is philosophic, in the sense in which everyone philosophizes, holds his own view of the world, and links up the facts of observation and experience into some sort of coherent system. Further, I believe that this idea or mental picture, which men within the Church share quite generally with men outside, owes more to the cosmology current a hundred years ago than it does to science, strictly and modernly defined. Nevertheless, we ought to investigate the question, whether or not we can believe in God and come into personal relationship with Him, and at the same time recognize the fixed and absolute reign of law which apparently controls and organizes the universe in which we live. It may be that many of us credit religion with a view of the world and an idea of God which are not, however many religious persons may accept them, really involved in the practice of religion. It may also be that some of our science is out of date, especially if we have failed to keep up with recent developments in physics and biochemistry.

(3) The third great question has to do with the relation between the religious life and life as a whole. This is no abstruse and hair-splitting question for philosophy to decide, though philosophers sometimes undertake it. It comes to this, practically: Is religion essential to a complete and genuine and wholesome life? There are many men and women in the world who feel no need for religion, either for themselves or for others. Are we to deny that they are happy and successful and get out of life as much as other people? Is religion only a part of human life, something less than life as a whole? Or does it embrace, penetrate, and leaven all of life? Is it, in fact, life itself under one particular aspect—perhaps its true and eternal aspect? And are there any values in human life higher than those which religion fosters or creates? In short, does it broaden or narrow a man to be religious?

Furthermore, how can a particular religion, Christianity, claim to be universal, the world-religion, destined for adoption by all nations and by every individual in the world? Recognizing the vast variety of religious beliefs and practices among the different races and peoples of mankind, how is any one religion entitled to claim finality and universal acceptance? Will one Church satisfy all the religious needs of every man? Will it even satisfy all the religious needs of one people, one nation, one community? Can its faith be not only catholic but also free, allowing for variations in development and varieties in experience?

So far from being an abstruse and academic question, with no interest or importance beyond the theological ingenuity it occasions, this is the very question facing the man invited to contribute to the support of Christian missions. We believe in sending teachers, doctors, sociologists, engineers to the ends of the earth. We are always doing it in times of peace, but especially during war. But why send missionaries? In spite of the war, in fact partly in consequence of the war, the

world is fast becoming a unit today, in commerce, in finance, in transportation, in education—we may almost say in politics, now that world-democracy is in the air. A world-culture, a world-civilization promises to develop within the next hundred years; but can we ever speak of a world-religion? I am confident that this is a vital question for many of us today. To many persons, 'Foreign Missions' sounds like an impertinence. "The heathen are satisfied with their religions; why force another upon them? And anyway, the other religions have just as fine points as Christianity." This is a common objection, and cannot be ignored.

There are still other forms this problem takes. For example, if religion, in spite of its 'irrational' origin (to use the language of Rudolf Otto), comes to have a real affinity with culture, along with the growth of the human mind, how are we to account for the persistence of its crude and barbarous elements —not only in savage isles afar but even in our cosmopolitan centers? If it really is religion—and not society itself—that possesses the powers of expansion, enlightenment, and growth attributed to it, how are we to account for the survival of such other traits, and for the ultra-conservatism of religious institutions in general, for the lower standards of education tolerated in strong religious groups, for the cult of ignorance or of crude emotion which is too often found among professional clergy the world over—securely sheltered as they are by priestly sanctions and exemptions such as are enjoyed by no other class of men? Moreover, why are religious men sometimes given to such gross exaggeration and overstatement? Is emotionalism a real characteristic of religion? And why is religion so vague and mysterious and unreasonable, claiming to deal with a realm that is 'supernatural' and assuming modes of contact therewith that defy the ordinary processes of thought and perception? Unless, or until, this difficulty is cleared up, there are many men who will not be able to make

much out of the religious 'experience' claimed by some of their fellows.

§ ii

It is one of the characteristic but not easily explained features of contemporary life that while there is a vast amount of discussion of religion, there is often a conspicuous absence of men from the institutional expression of it. This is the more surprising when one reflects that for ages past the majority of men have taken an active part in the public religious life of the community and the nation. Various explanations have been offered: men are no longer dominated by fear, and require none of the safeguards which religion has to offer; its appeal is only moral or esthetic. Or a wider range of intellectual interests lies before men at the present day—the old-fashioned weekly sermon has lost its hold upon their attention. Or perhaps Protestant subjectivism and individualism have at last borne their full fruits, and the objective, external, corporate emphasis in religion—in a word, religious institutionalism—is now on the wane; religion takes its place with poetry and art, which are matters purely of personal taste and preference, and 'authoritarianism' is taboo. At the same time there seems to be a turn in the tide; Protestantism is re-emphasizing the doctrine of the Church. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that the public profession of religious faith and its institutional expression and practice are not so common as they once were. Dean Inge believes that a time is upon us when the spiritual nucleus of the Church, the 'remnant' of prophetic teaching, must take measures to fortify its position —perhaps even to the extent of wearing a special garb and devoting itself to the cultivation of a life of simplicity and renunciation! [5]

However, there is promise in the very spirit of inquiry that

is abroad today. Wherever one goes, men are interested in discussing religion. Much of the discussion lacks a solid basis of firsthand knowledge, but that is no obstacle; men in smoking compartments will discuss anything that is discussable. Not infrequently, the most dogmatic expounder of his own views at the club is really in search of something better to take their place; discussion is the most popular medium of modern self-education!

What this book undertakes to offer is not, however, one more discussion, or exposition of a set of 'personal' views of religion; but a plain and simple statement, first of all, of what religion is as it is lived and practiced by the great majority of Christians at the present day. For what is needed by many of us, I strongly feel, is not so much a further discussion of religion, viewed objectively and from the outside, as some help and guidance in practicing it, experiencing it, so that we can come to know it immediately and *from the inside*. I have tried to avoid a partisan or 'denominational' presentation; the Christian religion is more than the tenets or practices of any one Christian group, and we miss 'the many-splendored thing' when we seek to confine it too narrowly. So precious are the fruits of the Spirit, so rich is the varied experience of the Lord's disciples everywhere, that not one utterance can be ignored. Every note is required to bring out the full-toned organ music of the Holy Ghost, breathing through the spiritual experience of men, diverse and often strongly contrasted, but yet making, all together, one strong and harmonious whole.[6]

At the same time, no one can get outside his own particular point of view, certainly not in so 'personal' a matter as religious faith. Its limitations he cannot escape, its advantages he must not forego. But I would say this in advance: what is set down here is offered other men solely with the aim of helping to make somewhat clearer the basic and ele-

mental religious practices and outlooks of our common Christian faith. The peculiarities, I trust, will be overlooked; the main emphases, I earnestly hope, will be of some use in showing how religion functions in normal, every-day life; why religious men observe certain practices and hold to certain beliefs; and the manner in which these beliefs and practices are coördinated in the minds of ordinary believers. One might even call it "Why we behave as religious beings."

The strongest force affecting the religious outlook of our generation is, of course, the war—in fact, two world wars through which we have somehow managed to live. This experience has deeply influenced all of us, and in the degree to which we have taken the war seriously; everyone, it is clear, has taken World War II far more seriously than World War I. But taking the war seriously, as a fundamental conflict between right and wrong, freedom and slavery, truth and falsehood, a conflict in which God himself is involved, results in the end in opening our minds to vaster issues, which can never be settled by armed force. For the victory of one nation or group of nations in battle is no guarantee of the ultimate victory of the right it has championed. The long agony of Europe, during the years since the 1918 Armistice, and now of the whole wide world, equally involved in it, has been nothing less than a prolongation and further extension of the original conflict. The victors have suffered—are suffering—scarcely less than the vanquished. For we are knit into one common 'Web of Life' as the scientists call it. And herein lies the challenge, to religion, of that vast catastrophic experience through which our generation passed in its youth, and through which the whole world is passing once more. If it has shaken to the foundations our traditional and inherited view of God and His relation to human affairs, no less does it reveal to us something of His actual working in the world. For if God Himself does not, can not, forbid the struggle, it is not

because He is impotent and indifferent to human weal or woe, like some Olympian deity remote from the earth, or the passionless, apathetic Absolute of certain old philosophies. The reason, we feel, is that God Himself is in the struggle, but somehow not as 'God,' in the old sense, omnipotent, irresistible, overwhelming His foes in utter confusion. Instead of the God of classical theology and philosophy, or the Aristotelian-Scholastic God of the middle ages, He reminds us far more of the Man on the Cross—free, but self-limited, and submitting voluntarily to the fate men have barbarously devised for their fellows. It is this doctrine of the absolute Freedom of God that has emerged once more out of the shadows, and gives us the clue to His working in our world. For if God is free; if God is concerned with the struggle in which we find ourselves; if, nevertheless, for some high purpose, He chooses not to intervene and spare us the painful efforts required to achieve nobler aims (let alone those for which the war is being fought); if, after all, there is a chance things may go to smash unless we do our honest best; if even the strongest efforts we make are stronger in alliance with Him; if, in a word, God really *needs* us in the plan of operations He is carrying out in the world, then life takes on a new and different meaning than it held before.

Though this is new to us, the meaning is very old—as old, in fact, as the Christian religion. For it is astonishing how largely the Gospel of Freedom bulks in the New Testament. Jesus proclaimed it; Paul never wearied of expounding it; the whole early Christian movement was inspired with a sense of inner release, of fresh newness of life, of a divine call to become fellow-workers with God and sharers in the spiritual activity, only lately set going in the world and abundantly evidenced on all hands, which was now bringing in at long last God's Reign upon earth. How we have tamed and toned down that message and that hope! How our fathers have

rationalized it, compromised it with ideas, religious and political, derived from a wholly different world-outlook, and turned the Kingdom of Heaven into a settled institution, part worldly, part other-worldly, but not at all revolutionary or world-upsetting.

Out of the ferment and turmoil of the First World War, out of the troubled peace that followed it, out of the horror and agony of the Second and we hope Last World War, there comes a fresh conviction about God, a fresh sense of His presence, a new realization of the task in which He is Himself engaged, which He calls us to share with Him, and a new sense of the divine freedom with which He has endowed every child of man as a potential sharer in His own perfect and creative freedom. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be. . . ."

Thus religion becomes no side-issue or department in life; it is "stuff o' the very stuff" of which our lives are all compact. And the practice of religion is no artifice or conjury for effecting petty and private ends, or for adding to the decorative amenities of social behavior, either moral or esthetic; it is the realization, in a world of mingled order and disorder, of struggle with imperfection and of battle against impending ruin, of the splendor and the ardor of a divine, creative Freedom.

## CHAPTER II

# *What Religion Is*

WHAT IS RELIGION? The question might be answered by collecting the various definitions which philosophers and theologians have made; or by an extended description and history of the various religions of humanity past and present. But in this book we are bent on avoiding as far as possible the speculative and academic treatment of religion. We intend to come directly face to face with the thing itself, at first hand. Let us enter at once the arena of personal experience!

### § i

Probably the most direct way for most of us to state what we think about religion is to refer to our observation of the lives and practice of persons whom we know, who profess some variety of religious faith. Outwardly, there is a certain amount of church-going, support of the Church, inviting of others to attend, keeping Sunday, saying prayers, reading the Bible, going to Prayer Meeting or Litany or early Mass. These things are characteristic of the religious person, whether he is a Catholic or a Protestant, an Episcopalian or a Quaker. There is variety enough in the outward observances; and yet the fact that outward observances are to be expected goes without saying. And from the outward marks of his behavior we infer that the man's inward attitude is that of devotion to some cause or ideal or Being. He makes this the standard and guide of his life. It implies, too, a certain standard of

morality—below which he cannot drop without meriting the scorn of his neighbors.

Now for the man who has happened not to grow up in an environment of religious life and activity, or who has been too thick-skinned to absorb much of its spirit, it is very easy to conclude that religion is entirely a private affair. If a man wishes to be a church-member, that is his business. One need feel no more obligation to imitate others in this regard than to imitate their recreations—such as golf, the theatre, or music. No one, at least no one in a democracy, has the right to interfere with another's religious belief or practice, so long as he works no injury to his community or his neighborhood. On the other hand, there is no imperative requirement that everyone shall be religious. From this it follows, further, that religion is something of a gift. You are born religious, just as you are born musical, or born lucky, or born with a taste for scientific study, or are 'a born business man.'

There is a certain amount of agreement with this opinion even among the ranks of the religious. The highest capacities for religious experience, and the experience itself, are looked upon as a special privilege. In the early Christian Church, there were those who boasted of special gifts of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak with tongues, to prophesy, to discern spirits, and so on. Even today, a sweet and gentle disposition, a somewhat shy and reticent temperament, when coupled with a consciousness of the near presence of Christ, or of the saints, or of the angels, is often looked upon as a high favor from God. Blest are they who possess the *anima naturaliter Christiana*—the soul which is Christian by nature!

§ ii

But such experiences are not the normal accompaniments of religion—and no testimony to this can be stronger than that

of the rank and file of the faithful in all ages. Therefore we must not be led to think that religion is necessarily the special privilege of the elect few; or that there are psychological barriers and limitations to its development—such as a peculiar mental outlook, softness of temperament, openness to stray impressions, susceptibility to transient moods.

What then is religion, if we are to take the testimony of its avowed professors and believers? Is it the cultivation of an other-worldly and ethereal outlook on life? Or, if it is not this, is it merely the observance of certain outward practices, obedience to certain rules, the performance of certain rites, the observance of certain customs? But both these definitions would be scouted by most religious men. They are too narrow. Religion is more than practice; and, on the other hand, you cannot judge it by abnormal specimens. It is something larger than abnegation and other-worldliness, something positive and affirmative and active; and it is something vastly more than rites and ceremonies and customs. The most religious observer of rites and ceremonies is usually the very man who insists most strongly that religion is more than rite and ceremony! And, by way of further paradox, the most other-worldly man I know is one who loves this world with all the ardor and earnestness of a full heart—there is nothing in the least 'ethereal' about his religion.

Take the religion of Jesus, that which he himself practised. Even outside the Church, he is still looked upon as the great religious hero of our race. Was his religion dependent upon mood or mental make-up? Was there anything weak or effeminate or world-renouncing in him? He could forego the world, well enough; he could overcome the world. What he could not do, what no serious person has ever supposed he could do, was to 'despise' the world, to retreat and withdraw before it, to flee away and escape from it, and build up, in retirement and defeat, a compensating world within, whose

joys were but shadows of the great world without—a blissful retreat whither no echoes of the noise and battle of that outer world could penetrate! No, he did not find the world too much for him. He did not discover it to be heartless or incomprehensible. His religion was no pleasant escape from the hardships, the trials, the riddles and vexations of life. It was a stiffer fight than ever that he proposed—only, with better weapons and superior force, insuring victory if used. And certainly he never dreamed of a religion limited to the privileged few; *all* men were called to repentance and faith.

And as for rites and ceremonies and outward manifestations of religion generally, it is well enough known that his religion, while recognizing the propriety and validity of such expressions, never stopped with these. No man can read the Gospels, in spite of sayings and narratives which may perhaps strike him as incongruous if not incomprehensible, without receiving the impression of immense sanity, of tremendous backgrounds, of far-flung horizons, of powers of mind held in reserve such as few if any other men have ever possessed. He was no ritualistic zealot; nor was he the fanatical follower of an inner light or a superior wisdom which led him into retreat and renunciation before the overwhelming problems of human life. Here, if ever, was a normal man. For all his expectation of the coming Judgment and end of the age, for all his devotion to a cause which led to inevitable martyrdom, he was as sane and balanced and normal a man as the world has ever seen. Surely, his testimony concerning religion cannot be set aside.

§ iii

No one will disagree, I am sure, with what I am about to say of his religion. It is not the whole of his religion, by any means; but it points out the fundamentals.

His religion meant—this is probably the first thing that strikes the ordinary man—his religion meant *a high moral life*. The Sermon on the Mount is still the beacon set upon the hills for the guidance of the nations of men, however far short of its ethics most of us fall. He came not to destroy the old religious-moral-social Law of his people: rather, he came to fulfill it, that is, to observe it personally, and also to enlarge its scope, deepen its significance, in a word, to complete it. This he certainly did. In place of the old prohibition of adultery, and the indulgent permission of divorce, he said frankly that adultery began in the heart: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to desire her, hath committed adultery already"; and he insisted that the cruel practice of divorce contravened the will of God. So in regard to the prohibition of stealing, oaths, revenge, and all the social enactments of the Jewish Law. Jesus went to the very roots of human conduct, and demanded a righteousness of motive rather than a mere righteousness of behavior. This was 'fulfilling the Law,' clearly enough. It meant taking the ancient and in large measure primitive law of the Hebrew tribes and making it the vehicle of the highest morality the world has seen. This is the first outstanding characteristic of his religion.

Certainly this much was not the special privilege of a few souls naturally inclined toward religion! He meant this to be the 'religion of all good men.'

In the next place, his religion was *intensely personal*. In fact, his religion has been somewhat loosely described by the phrase, 'The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.' But it was not in the philosophical sense that he meant it. He had no theory of the universal Fatherhod of God, nor any ideal of the incorporation of all human society within a grand international brotherhood of blood and affection. Rather, it was simply this: he had discovered God—when, we do not know, but probably very early in his life—and he

discovered Him not as the mighty Giver of the Law of his people, not as 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity' of the prophets and seers; he had discovered in Him his *Father*, One who was so close to him, so intimately related to him, so concerned in his being and welfare, that all other words were inadequate to indicate His character.

Here were the two foci in his religious life. Or rather, here were the centres of two enormous circles, brought so near to each other that they are virtually indistinct, inseparable, though one be so vast it contain within it the other. These were the consciousness of God, of a unique relation to God, the eternal heavenly Father whose Son he was; and a command or a control of human life from this point of view, which embraced a renewed, reinterpreted, deepened Law, with a far heavier demand for devotion and self-sacrifice. So incisive was this requirement that it fell nothing short of a demand for moral and spiritual regeneration, so that a man must become once more as a little child, be born again, and grow up in a different world of moral values, ideals, aspirations. "Love God. . . . This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, Love your neighbor as yourself."

It was in the second or moral circle that the revolutionary force of the first became apparent: the one was effective because the other was transforming and causative. The Kingdom, the expected New Age which God was to bring upon the earth, held quite naturally a place in his consciousness of God. For God was the Father, and the Kingdom was His paternal Reign. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." God was the King of the coming Kingdom: He was in a sense even more King of the future than of this present world! Sin—what was it but the dominion of Satan, the denial of God, a blight upon life, a weakening alike of the consciousness of God and of the

power which ought to be in control of human life? His own ministry of healing—what was it but the work of the Spirit which was upon him, given him in order to free men from the burden and blight of sin, to undo the works of the devil, to 'bind the strong man in his court' and 'divide his spoils'? His own death—what was its meaning but the final rescue of men from this tyranny and usurpation of the evil one, the ransom of his prisoners, the overthrowing of his whole dominion? Satan stood where God's throne ought to be. Therefore the battle with sin and Satan and death in God's name. Thus all his religious ideas, all his religious practice, take their place and receive their value as related to his consciousness of God, which is supreme, complete, unbroken all his life long. Here was the secret source of his tremendous sanity, his reserve strength, his unerring decision, his completely controlled and unified activity of will. This was the secret of Jesus: everything in life was subordinate to his consciousness of God. There was nothing in his life that was divisive or antagonistic, nothing that might induce rebellion or outrage this supreme consciousness. He lived in God, and in obedience to His will. Existence was inconceivable apart from God, or in obedience to any other will than His. Thus Jesus was untroubled by any sense of constraint, of forced submission, of a heart which longed for things other than those that were pleasing to God. Happiness, success, the attainment of his own aims, even life itself, were simply not sacrificed to God—they were actually *found* in Him.

What he willed for others was no less than what he already knew for himself: God's loving Fatherhood, the freedom and power of sonship, a life subject to the gentle but constant control of the supreme will of God—this was Jesus' religion. He was in a unique sense the Son of God; but he willed to share this heavenly sonship with his followers and friends.

§ iv

Is there any Common Denominator for the religion of Christ and that of his followers? Or perhaps we should ask, Is there any Greatest Common Divisor of both? Is there anything which is common to both, and to all religious men, any element which runs through all religion? I believe that there is, and will venture to state it briefly: *Religion is life controlled by the consciousness of God.*

This definition may not be exhaustive; but at least it is not vague, and we may start out with it. Religion is life, nothing less. It is life controlled, guided, held firmly to a fixed purpose and aim which is determined by this 'faith' or awareness of God. This admits of various degrees. The control may be imperfect, it may be relaxed now and again, it may not be continuous; but it is the strength of the control that indicates the reality of the religion.

Moreover, it is controlled by a consciousness—not by an idea, which would be artificial. You do not first embrace an idea of God and then fashion your life to suit it. On the contrary, the idea embraces you. The consciousness itself fashions and frames your life as it enters more and more into control of it. This again admits of various degrees. The consciousness may be little more than a sense of responsibility for living a decent life, a feeling of accountability to the highest and best in the universe for the things we do, say, think, and feel. Or it may be the full consciousness of God's presence in which saint and mystic daily walk. And between these two extremes, there are all sorts and varieties of religious consciousness.

Lastly, what makes this consciousness religious is (1) the fact that it is consciousness of God, not of duty, or law, or necessity, or any abstraction: it is concrete and personal; and also (2), the fact that the consciousness of God is in genuine

control of the life of a man. However imperfectly, intermittently and brokenly his life may respond to this control, he is nevertheless a religious man—he is an example (in some sort) of religion.

Here then is our first principle: Religion is life controlled by the consciousness of God. We must beware of misjudging, of making the false assumption that religion is something concerned merely with outward behavior, for it is much more than this; or that it is an inner disposition or frame of mind enjoyed only by the elect, who were born religious and 'cannot help it.'

The first problem, then, in every man's case, is simply resolved to this: Am I conscious of God? If not, may I become so? When one considers the vast reaches of this consciousness, from the sense of fear and awe before the extraordinary and prodigious, from the faintest sense of 'ought,' and the dawning reverence for what is lofty and beautiful and ennobling in human life, from the very first beginnings of wonder and worship, to the heights of Christ's ineffable intercourse with the Father; when one considers the range of this consciousness, then the possibility of personal religion increases considerably. Somewhere in this vast and varied stretch of the religious life there is bound to be a place for my life with God, my own personal and private relationship with the eternal and infinite Being above me. I am encouraged to try, to seek it out, to begin somewhere, to find life. And it really does not matter much where a man begins, if he keeps going on. For religion, as we said, is life; and life means growth, expansion, progress, variety. No matter how narrow or impoverished a man's sense of God may be, let him not give up. Let him not say, "Unless I can enter the very holy of holies, unless I can find what Christ and the Saints, or even my mother and father, found therein, I will not put my foot one step within the shrine." For no matter how poor your begin-

ning, no matter how slow your progress, you have all eternity to grow in; but you must begin now!

The next problem is involved in the question, Is my consciousness of God in actual control of my life? If not, how may it become so? Here, the answer is two-fold. Sacrifice whatever in your present life forms an obstacle to this control. Then relax and let God take possession of you. Give yourself to Him. This is what consecration means, and sacraments, and self-dedications, and vows: all these mean, simply, giving oneself to God. And giving yourself to God and to His purposes must be permanent and continuous. You must not ask back the gift, or take it without the asking. You must dedicate all that you have and all that you are to the highest and best you know: that is, to what you know of God, to that which forms your own particular consciousness of Him, to God in so far as He is revealed to you.

And this step will lead on to the next.

## CHAPTER III

# *The Practice of Religion*

Now if religion is viewed as life controlled by the consciousness of God, certain obvious inferences follow. For one thing, if religion is worth while (as all who have experienced it believe), then it must be *cultivated*. And it must be cultivated with due regard to both of its essential elements: we are to cultivate both the consciousness of God and the control of life. That is putting it as briefly as possible. Both are essential to religion. About these the present chapter is concerned.

### § i

It is an unfortunate result of the theory that religion is a special gift or talent that it kills out the incentive to cultivate it. If a person has no aptitude for music or painting, he will not, if he has good sense, waste his time trying to acquire skill in either art. He knows well enough how futile such efforts usually are. So if a man is persuaded that religion is possible only to the souls naturally religious, he will very likely refuse to cultivate what he thinks is really beyond his reach. He will leave religion to the clergy, the pious, his wife, perhaps, and any others who respond instinctively to its appeal.

If we were to trace the origin of this opinion of religion, we might look first of all into the popular results of the revivalism of the last century. Much good was undoubtedly accomplished by the revivals of religion which took place in various places and in different religious bodies. Many souls were brought face to face with the realties of life who otherwise would have gone

on in ignorance and carelessness and sin. But, at the same time, it must be recognized that there were relapses from the high-pitched moods of conversion; there were 'backsliders' whose last state was far worse than the first. And there were also those who were unable to come to a decision; who failed to feel 'conviction of sin'; and who went on their way hardened more than ever against the life of religion. Thus, on the one hand, religion was made far too easy; on the other, it was made vastly too hard. Too easy, for those persons of open and responsive temperament, pliable emotions, who could readily feel themselves passing through the standardized spiritual process of 'conviction, conversion, consecration.' They were urged to 'step over the line' into the state of salvation; they were to 'accept Christ as personal Savior,' and all would be well. This was accomplished in countless cases, and souls were actually saved—to health and wholesomeness and soundness of life, which is surely the outward mark of true salvation, if any such mark exists. But the process was so easy, indeed so irresistible, that there actually were persons who backslid and were converted again and again, repeating the process almost periodically. On the other hand, the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven were effectually closed against persons who lacked this facile emotionalism, who could not 'feel' one way or another, either doomed or saved, and who came to the conclusion which we have suggested above—viz. that religion was not for them, that it required gifts which they personally did not possess (and perhaps were not sorry not to possess), and that they would steer as straight a course as possible without the help of religion, and 'trust to good luck to get there somehow.'

Now everyone who knows what religion means in its essential character, at least everyone who recognizes any truth in the definition we have proposed, namely, the consciousness of God in control of man's life, will also recognize that religion

means much more than 'stepping over the line' into salvation. The line may be there, true enough; he may visualize it as clearly as anyone else; and he may consciously 'step over' into newness of life: but this is by no means all there is to religion. And compared with the totality of religious life and experience, this is in fact a meagre and merely initiatory stage. The harm has already been done to the souls of many men not gifted with much emotion. And only the continual and repeated affirmation of the truth, which is quite the opposite from the conclusion generally held, will assure them of the possibility, for them, of a real religious life.

This we positively assert: there is no man who may not possess some sort of consciousness of God; and there is not a man on earth who may not bring his life into submission to this consciousness. Moreover, religion is not achieved in one mighty spurt; it is a long, slow, gradual process. It is an education. It begins in childhood—or should begin. It develops with the development of mind and body. It reaches maturity, but only to begin a new process of expanding growth. It never ceases. It is always fresh, as it ought to be. It does not become stale and worn-out and burdensome. This is its highest proof of reality, viz. its own constant self-renewal.

We need today something of the spirit of the ancient Stoics, those noble pagan teachers of morality and religion in ancient Greece and Rome. Their theology was pantheistic and unsatisfying; their morality was limited too greatly by the customs of their time. But their spirit was immense! They always came at the problems of life with a practical and reasonable proposal. "If a thing is within your power, use it; if not, do not waste your time in whining! If you are a man, do the things proper to manhood, be a man, be noble, be free, be wise and self-controlled, act as becomes the offspring of Zeus which you are." To them, there was nothing on earth so repulsive as a man who admitted his failure and offered ex-

cuses for not playing a man's part on every occasion. And in their view, to possess religion and not to cultivate it was high treason to the universe. No human faculty has been given us save for use, for exercise and cultivation. "God has not only given us these faculties, by which we shall be able to bear everything that happens without being depressed or broken by it; but, like a good King and a true Father, He has given us these faculties free from hindrance, subject to no compulsion, unimpeded, and has put them entirely in our own power, without even having reserved to Himself any power of hindering and impeding." [1] "To God you ought to swear an oath just as the soldiers do to Caesar. But they who are hired for pay swear to regard the safety of Caesar before all things; and you who have received so many and such great favors, will you not swear, or when you have sworn, will you not abide by your oath? And what shall you swear? Never to be disobedient, never to make any charges, never to find fault with anything that He has given, and never unwillingly to do or to suffer anything that is necessary. Is this oath like the soldier's oath? The soldiers swear not to prefer any man to Caesar: in this oath men swear to honor themselves." [2]

Now the practice of religion is within a man's power. And it is the practice of religion which will lead him to the highest and noblest kind of life. We do not say that he will be eternally doomed if he does not become religious: we say only that he will miss the very best that human life affords. It is utterly foolish to resign oneself to failure and incapacity and lack of proper training or temperament! Up, man, you have no great number of years for dallying along your way! Do you think you have all spring to sow your fields, all summer to train your vines, all autumn to harvest your grain? "There is a time for everything under the sun." Not any and every time will do. The grain must be sowed this very week, the harvest will not wait when once it is ripe. Merely to delay, to

put off the beginning, means loss. You have it within your power; no one can hinder you—"not even God Himself," as Epictetus said, "will do so"; a Christian would say, "God will help you," and so He will. But you must begin; you must make the effort, the start, and 'not waste your time in thinking about it.'

§ ii

How can a man set about to cultivate the consciousness of God? What sort of rules can be given for such a practice?

1. The first suggestion that will occur to many persons is doubtless Reading. Cultivate the consciousness of God by learning what this consciousness has been to others. Read the Bible, wherein is unveiled not only the awareness of God which was possessed more or less by a whole nation, and especially by its leaders, but also the very mind and spirit of God Himself, by a kind of self-revelation. But reading, even of the Bible, however helpful it may be later on, may not be absolutely necessary at the start. For if God is real, if an awareness of Him may become real for me, then I want to know Him at first hand, and directly—not by way of some other man's awareness.

2. There are some who would recommend Solitude. As Whitehead says, "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness." Men have found God while walking in the woods, or in the sunlit silence beside a summer lake, or even within a bare, unfurnished room, such as a monastic cell. We do not doubt that solitude is helpful to some persons, but that it is needful to all is by no means clear. There are those to whom the silence of solitude is entirely distracting. They require activity, sound, hearing, a voice; solitude merely unnerves them.

3. Or a man may launch forth in the fragile vessel of his

own imagination. He may try to picture God to himself, and trust that God will not fail to correspond to the highest and best figure in which the human mind can represent Him. But this is often a hindrance; for the picture of God gets substituted for God Himself. And how often people fail to remove the pictures that suited their religion in the nursery and to replace them with pictures suited to maturity! How often we hear that some man's faith has gone crashing to ruin against the hard facts of life, simply because his mind was still tied to the images of his childhood! Here is the same danger, though on a different level, which the prophets found in idolatry, and the reformers found in the ecclesiastical use of statuary and painting and colored windows.

4. A fourth method which is proposed is that of Introspection. Seek God within! He is not far from every one of us; His Kingdom is within you! But this is apt to be morbid. A man finds more than God within him—he finds selfishness and covetousness and discontent; and then he goes on to ponder over his faults and to harrow himself with delicate questions about the operations of grace in his heart and quite loses God in a maze of discouragement and self-distrust. Or else he fails to find God at all; he seeks Him diligently enough, but ten to one he can look straight at God and not see Him, like the person gazing at a cliff and not recognizing a man's face in its profile, or looking at the nightly constellations and failing to recognize the creatures of mythology. A man must be conscious of God *first*, before he can safely undertake a search for Him within. Alas for those seekers after God who have forgotten or failed to realize this simple fact!

5. Another plan is that of Meditation, which has much to recommend it. But here also, there is much to discourage us. For it is a hard thing for a man untrained in meditation to use it as a means of arriving at the consciousness of God, or of cultivating it after it is found. But if a person will carefully

train his mind in meditation, so that instead of wandering about in trackless, arid wastes of speculation he actually gets somewhere and achieves something, then he will find it useful in developing his consciousness of God.

6. But there is one method which is not discouraging: it is prayer! One might suppose that, in comparison with this, all other methods are so superfluous and artificial that no one would adopt them in preference. It is like the stroke of genius —which finally proposes the very simplest, homeliest solution for some problem of engineering, and is recognized at once to be the one that has been looked for all along. For this is the very simplest of methods, hardly to be called a method, since it dispenses with all 'methods,' techniques, and machinery of whatever sort.

> Speak to Him, thou, for He hears,
> And spirit with spirit can meet;
> Closer is He than breathing,
> And nearer than hands and feet.

"Speak to Him!" Pray, for that is what all prayer is, namely, speaking to God.

The practice of prayer we shall treat at length later on. Here let us only say that very few directions can be given as to its use. Jesus gave very few. "When you pray, enter your inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret" (Matthew vi. 6). "When you pray, say, Father, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation" (Luke xi. 2-4). In the spirit of that prayer is to be found true access to and communion with God. This, together with the assurance that "he who seeks will find, he who asks will receive, to him that knocks it will be opened," is about all that one person can tell another about it. More artificial methods may be described

in detail, and definite prescriptions given. But here each man must find out for himself. He must learn by his own experience. What led Jesus to give his prayer to the disciples was their request, "Lord, teach us to pray." He taught them to pray, not by elaborating rules for prayer, or by describing the processes or the sensations, or the rewards of communion with God: he simply led them to pray as he did. And that is how we must all learn. It is the only way in which we *can* learn. But it is a way that is 'as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

§ iii

And now we come to the cultivation of the *control*, the second great and essential element in religion. How are we to accomplish this? Are there methods which will be of service here?

William James advised the daily practice of works of supererogation, the daily doing of tasks beyond what was required, simply in order to stiffen the will and to discipline oneself to obedience, just as the soldier drills in order to be strong and dependable when the day of battle comes. But it is not simply in order to discipline the individual will that the practice of religion ought to be undertaken. The virtues—and virtuous deeds—are more than a manual of arms or a set of drill regulations. They have a positive value in themselves.

Take forgiveness, for example. This is one of the very hardest duties (when it becomes a duty) in the world. But it is not simply in order to discipline his will, or to secure self-control, that a man forces himself to forgive an enemy! The act of forgiveness has a value far outlasting the mere disciplinary one of the act itself. It is the universe itself which profits to some extent, by the forgiveness. It is pleasing to God. It is good for society. It advantages the man forgiven.

And it benefits the forgiver, in a superlative degree. And yet neither for the sake of the discipline, nor yet for some 'merit' which will accrue to the one who performs this act of piety, is it to be done. Herein certain ancient manuals of the spiritual life were sometimes at fault: it is not, "Cast thy bread upon the water, for thou shalt find it after many days"; it is not, "Forgive in order to make sure your own forgiveness by God." Rather it is, as still older manuals had it, "Forgive, for the sake of the love of God"; "forgive, not in order to be forgiven, but forgive because you also have *hope* of forgiveness." This is quite another thing.

Or take humility, as a further example. It is true that 'he that humbles himself shall be exalted, and he that exalts himself shall be abased.' But it is more than discipline that the Teacher of that principle had in mind. It is also more than a crafty appeal to self-interest—"Take a little humiliation now, so that in the end you may enjoy permanent exaltation." For humility, a kind of minimizing sense of our own merit relatively to that of others, alone makes the highest social relationships possible. The spirit of Achilles, 'best of the Achaeans,' means the end of any finer social intercourse than that of the *bravo* and his fellow plunderers. Humility, then, is something good in itself, and its practice is of value wholly apart from the discipline it gives a man in acquiring it. The same is true of unselfishness and charity, which we might examine in the same way. The whole world profits, 'even the unthankful and evil' profit, the man himself profits, heaven rejoices, the very heart of God is gladdened by this manifestation of goodness in human life; after all, the discipline is the smallest part of it.

And so the practice of religion, in particular the cultivation of the control over life of a man's consciousness of God, his awareness of the Eternal and Infinite above him, is a thing wholesome and worth while. Its value is as great socially as it

is individually, even more so. Hence any method which might be prescribed for enlarging and strengthening this control must not be conceived as of value solely for this one end. It is here that we see the genuine and not spurious supernaturalism of religion. It moves in a higher world than the physical and material. Its causes are not single causes of one succeeding effect, and then of another succeeding this, in a chain of effects, a causal series. The effects flow forth at once. Instead of one, there are a hundred powers and values in the good deed, the kind thought, the unselfish motive; and a man and his fellows, God and the world, the present and the future all benefit.

And so the first thing to be said in answer to the question is, Launch forth! Set about it! Cultivate it by practice, by exercise, by making it real in daily life. Try to effect the control on every occasion. Let your awareness of God regulate completely your attitude to other persons. If you think of God as the Distant Lawgiver, or the Future Judge, well and good; or if you think of Him as the Present Father, or as the Immanent Spirit of the Universe, it matters not, at first. As Phillips Brooks advised, "Be the noblest man that your present faith, poor and weak and imperfect as it is, can make you be. Live up to your present growth, your present faith. So, and so only, do you take the next straight step forward, as you stand strong where you are now; so only can you think the curtain will be drawn back and there will be revealed to you what lies beyond." Don't wait to get your idea of God straightened out. Rather, begin *now* to act upon it, and the idea will take care of itself—since our ideas in large measure reflect our experience. Bring your life into submission to this high and single motive. Let it govern all your conduct.

Now this may take place in two ways, by struggle and by relaxation. Most often, it takes place in both ways, and in

the order just given. The struggle for self-control goes on for a time, with or without complete success. Then comes an hour when the more excellent way appears. Instead of striving by exercise of reason and effort of will to quell the rebellious powers within me, to control their wayward wanderings, I relax into the arms of God, I fall back upon the forces of the universe, and find that now the very stars in their courses are moving for and with me.

It is simple and practical good sense which has led me to this step—the simplest and most practical in the world. What I cannot do myself, I let God do for me. It is folly to ignore the currents of life, the tide and the wind, and to set forth against them both and try to gain headway by sheer brute force. Rather, let me take advantage of them. Let the tides sweep me forth upon their broad bosom. Let the winds take me into their soft embrace, unconstrained, but unconstrainable. So, after all, my bark sets forth auspiciously, for all its beating about in head winds and against strong contrary tides. The proper moment is seized, and I do no more than let God move and use me as He will.

It is the same good sense which the logger uses, letting the forest stream float his timber to the mill; or the engineer who empties a lake by syphon instead of pump; or the miller who dams up the brook to turn his wheel for him. Yet how difficult it is to apply this wisdom to religion! Instead, we 'kick against the pricks,' we quarrel with circumstances, we fight and protest, and undertake by main force to drag along with us our own lower selves, our divided wills, our double purposes, our half-disciplined tempers into the Kingdom of God. But flesh and blood do not inherit the Kingdom. If we cannot save our whole self, let us save what we can of it. If an arm is pinned in the wreckage, off with it to save the man! If we cannot bring all of life into submission to God's will, then let us bring what we can, and sacrifice the rest. "If your

hand or your foot cause you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands and two feet to be cast into Gehenna." Sacrifice, that is to say, is the only solution in many cases. As Bishop Gore put it, "A safe life is better than a complete one."

But how, after this is done, can we relax and yield the control to God? How do we manage the process of handing over the reins to Him? Usually it is not so difficult as it sounds. By the simplest act of the will, or—there are some who will understand it better this way—by no act of the *will* at all; by a simple resignation and handing over of the whole matter to God, the thing is done at once. But there are some persons for whom no other method is possible than one which amounts practically to auto-suggestion, viz. by acts of faith, hope, love. A man must say to himself, "I belong to God. The problem is not mine but His. So far, I have done nothing but hinder the solution. Let me out of the way so that God can act. I will stand aside!" And then to God he must say, "I am Thine, O God. I am Thy servant. Here am I, Lord, send me. Use me for Thy purposes. Give me a task for Thee. Do Thy will through me. Let me lose my life, my self, in Thee, and have nothing left of my own." This is the way of mental prayer, of interior surrender, of relaxation into the arms of God. For 'underneath *are* the everlasting arms.'

It is just as with the tree in a storm, or the steel framework of a building in a hurricane, or the bridge over which a heavy train is crossing. It relaxes. It falls back upon itself. It makes of itself a gigantic cushion upon which to receive the shock. As a result, the minor strains do not wreck it, and the great strain, which taxes its entire strength to sustain, is reduced, is caught and spread and softened. The bridge gives and settles, it yields and sways, it cushions the strain, distributes it, until the very height of tension comes; and then it stands

firm with all its might, employs all its resistance, and holds. In effect it has made itself only a huge mattress or cushion to receive the shock: the real resistance is in the earth itself, upon which it rests. No longer is it a ten-thousand-ton steel framework which is withstanding the shock, but the practically infinite resistance of the whole earth, indeed of the whole solar system.

So it is in the practice of religion. On beyond the outward performance of virtuous deeds, on beyond the schooling of self-discipline, there is an art of control which passes the responsibility, in a sense, out of our hands into God's, gives Him the reins, so to speak, and lets Him save us from ourselves, enables Him to triumph over our half-beaten foes. We win the victory and rejoice in it; but it is God Himself, not our own right arm, that has gotten us the victory. It is still the awareness of God which controls our lives. Perfect control is effected only when God himself, of whom we are conscious, 'takes His great power and reigns' in us. Yet it is effected through our consciousness, for we *realize* God as never before, when the hour of His occupation comes, and our petty command is submitted to His supreme command. It is as when the King becomes Lord of the castle he visits. There is joy and peace, and a sense of exaltation and of security, which nothing on earth can shake.

Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say unto the Lord, Thou art my hope and my stronghold,
My God, in Him will I trust (Psalm xc. 1-2).

§ iv

If we were to go back two or three thousand years in history, we should find that the practice of religion embraced, chiefly, a great number and variety of external practices:

sacrifices, lustrations, libations, and so forth. Even a thousand years ago, it meant, chiefly, certain external acts, vows, penances, shrivings, pilgrimages, the hearing or saying of masses, visiting of sacred relics, and so on. The thoroughly religious man had, almost of necessity, to become a 'religious' in the technical sense, i.e. a monk, if he was to satisfy the requirements of the time.

Now he would be a very narrow-minded Protestant indeed who refused to recognize the genuinely religious motive in such external acts. They were intended, at least by those who authorized and by most of those who observed them, either to cultivate the consciousness of God, or to increase its control over human life; that is, they were either designed to cultivate, or they resulted from, the consciousness of God. Childish, certainly, the means adopted may often enough have been. But who is prepared to identify what is childish with what is false and unreal? Happily, we have no need to defend our religious principles today by such a method.

Today, however, it must be recognized, by all persons who have any insight at all into the workings and tendencies of the modern world, that men are living upon a different level of civilization and culture. The external element in religion makes considerably less appeal than it did to our ancestors. And it is less natural as an expression of religious feeling. Whether we approve or disapprove, on religious or psychological or esthetic grounds, Puritanism has been on the earth, and has done its work. 'Externalism' is on the wane. Even in the ritualistic Churches, like the Roman and Anglican, it is not so strong as it once was—in spite of counter-currents and restorations. If one studies the contrast, for example, between the outward practice or expression of religion in the twentieth century and in the thirteenth, as seen both in the ceremonial of public worship and in private devotion and piety, he will hardly remain long in doubt of this. We are

living at a stage of culture where the conscious and voluntary practice of interior religion, the conscious cultivation of the religious spirit and motives, unaided by external means and media—in a word, 'mysticism'—is the method followed by increasing numbers of men and women. The old helps are now often felt to be hindrances. Hence the practice of religion involves the most genuine and concentrated effort at self-control, without the external aids of organization (as in monasticism), or of atmosphere (like the *Zeitgeist* of the crusading period), or of ceremonial (as in Christian chivalry and knighthood). Or it means the most complete spiritual surrender of the will to God, without external helps here either (such as confession and penance, vows, religious 'duties,' fasting, poverty, 'obedience,' and so forth). Our problem —at least as Protestants—is to discover and retain what was fundamental and permanent in the ancient practice of religion, in an age which finds unnecessary and lacking in significance much of the outward manifestation of religion in those by-gone days. How are we to discover what is fundamental and permanent? The answer is simply and solely by experience, that is, by *experiment*.

How far this tendency away from externalism will go, we have no means of knowing. It is hardly likely to go as far as Quietism or Quakerism, which seem scarcely suited to the needs of the majority of us. But we may confidently assert that it has not yet gone beyond early Christianity, which was almost wholly unceremonial and non-ritualistic. The Puritanism of primitive Christianity has never since been surpassed, or equalled. It was a Puritanism not of doctrine or of ecclesiastical organization, but of the personal practice of religion. It was the Puritanism which existed generally in the Church before its enthusiasm was expended in monastic austerities or lost in the ecclesiastical imperialism of the fourth and following centuries.

And since, as all Christians are coming increasingly to recognize today, the Church is in a true sense Catholic, and ought to embrace on its human side *all* types and varieties of religious life, not only of individuals but of nations, centuries, eras, there is room within the Church for Puritanism: that of the first and second centuries, that of the seventeenth, that of today. There is and of right ought to be at least as much room for Puritanism as for the ceremonialism and 'sanctified paganism' of the third to fifteenth centuries! And in a Catholic religion, a truly Catholic Christianity, provision must be made both for the needs of various national religious types, and for those of various times and periods—since the types recur. Likewise, there must be room for individual variations: one person will find a peculiar need for external assistance in his religious life, another will find life more natural and easy without such aid. Inheritance will count for much; environment will set its stamp upon a man's whole mind and life. Variety should certainly be a key-note of true catholicity. Unity in variety: that is the life of religion in humanity, and the only hope of a world-church. Almost two thousand years ago, St. Paul proclaimed the true catholicity of Christianity in such words as these: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman or freeman; but Christ is all, and in all." We today might echo his words as follows: "There is now neither Latin nor Anglo-Saxon, Puritan nor Catholic, ceremonialist nor sacramentalist, nor mystic, ascetic, nor devotee, who has a preëminent right to the name of Christian; for Christ is the Savior of all men, and all have a share in Him."

It is for the reasons adduced above that anyone inclined to decry the present tendency as unreligious or unchristian ought to weigh his words. It is not as if the world had never been here before, or the Church. It is not as if religion were tied to one particular group of ideas or set of practices. It is

not as if for religion to change its outward manifestation meant its ceasing to be religion. It is not as if Christianity must be *either* Catholic *or* Protestant, either mediaeval or modern, either Latin or English or Celtic, to be real. Life means variety. Variety cannot exist in religion without tolerance. Tolerance, sympathy, understanding ought then to be the very first note of a living faith or a catholic religion. It does not matter in the least that this has not characterized Christian practice in the past. No one—at least within the Church—imagines that Christianity has yet begun to achieve its whole program, or fully to manifest its real powers and essential character. "The best is yet to be."

§ v

We have taken time out, in the last section, for the purpose of staking off the ground, so to speak, upon which the practice of religion is to take place. It is out of the question, today, to try to practice religion and at the same time to hold a narrow, intolerant attitude toward others, or to suppose that there can be only one true type of religion. As if anyone could say what that true type is! There are as many types of religion in the world as there are types of men. And one would find, upon inquiry, just as many 'true' types as there are bigoted religionists to proclaim their own and no other type to be true! On the contrary, religion is the broadest and most human thing we can experience. The truth is, the gateway to the religious life is just that and nothing more: there is a gateway but no gate. For "the gates of that city are never closed by day"—or by night. No one can open it for himself and close it against another—since there is nothing to open or close. You can enter, or not enter; but you cannot open a gate, enter, and then close it firmly behind you! And this remains true, even while it is also true that

tolerance is meaningless without conviction. Only a genuinely religious man can exercise tolerance, can recognize, that is, the rights of others to their own convictions and expressions of religion. Anything less is mere indifference.

But what most of us need to be told, perhaps, is rather that if we would enter, we must be up and about it. No one drifts into the religious life as he would drift down a river in an oarless boat. Religion is very largely a matter of will, of activity, of growth. It must be cultivated, or it will easily degenerate into mere speculation and opinion about religion. To be made efficient, it must be exercised. Thus charity, humility, patience, gentleness, and the other virtues must be put in actual practice, or they will become not our own but only the rare and reputed possession of the saints.

Even the higher and seemingly more difficult act of surrender to God requires practice. The mere act of surrender is still an act. There is a story of a man in Wales, who was walking by night along a path on the edge of a sloping precipice. He slipped over and fell, tumbling from cranny to ledge, losing hold and falling again and again until he caught the limb of a stout, gnarly tree that grew in the face of the cliff. Here he clung for hours with desperate grip, aware of the peril he was in if the limb gave way, or his hands let go. As the hours went by, and the darkness began to pass away, he looked down and saw beneath him, not the yawning chasm he had imagined but the solid ledge of rock, three yards across, and not six inches from the soles of his feet! What stood between him and—not only actual safety—but also the sense of safety was an act, a genuine and positive act, of release and self-committal. The act was not performed because he did not know the ledge lay beneath him. But in religion we know. We feel about, we experiment, we touch and measure the ledge before we trust our whole weight upon it. We have an assurance beforehand that the ledge is there,

and that it will hold. What we need to do is let go, and trust ourselves to God!

If the description of this process of surrender of the will to God, as given above, and as thousands before us have described it, seems to some persons to be sentimental and unmanly, and therefore not so much difficult as weak and mawkish, let it be remembered that a certain anthropomorphism is unavoidable in religious speech. 'The arms of God' are as much a figure of speech as 'the armies of God,' and mean in this case only the divine acceptance and support of us and our burdens, as a mother gathers up her child, with his toys and troubles, into her arms. It was the same when Jesus used the word 'Father' for God, as the least unsuitable word in human language, the nearest expression for the relation in which he knew God and himself, God and His 'children' to stand. But he went beyond the human significance of the word, and gave it a meaning so inexhaustible in wealth of hidden connotation that the ordinary speech of men today, twenty centuries later, enjoys its enrichment. Every use of the word 'father' today means more since Christ used it of God in heaven.

It is the positive and actual cultivation of religion, of the awareness of God in control of a man's whole life, giving it not only direction and aim but purpose and meaning and value, that we must set before us. This is the second principle to be mastered: *Religion is an art which may be cultivated, like any other art.* A man may have an original endowment of talent or even of genius in this direction, just as the painter or musician has it in another. But without cultivation even this is of little value. And cultivation requires effort, determination, and purpose. The true cultivation of religion is found in the continued and steady practice of religion.

## CHAPTER IV

# *Religion and Morality*

CANNOT A MAN LIVE a good life without being religious? The answer is undeniably, Yes. But we are reminded of that maxim of Thoreau's, "Be not simply good; be good for something." A man may live a good life: but what makes it 'good'? Where does the idea of goodness, by which we judge it, come from? And since it is good, what is it good *for?*

There is a great deal of vague thinking and unreasoned talk today about being good without being religious. One wonders where it originated, and what sort of situation in our modern religious and social world gave rise to it. The most natural supposition in the world is that a man would wish to be religious as well as 'good,' and that morality and religion are, if not identical, at least not distantly related.

One enormous mistake has been made even by devout religious people, namely, that of praising religion at the expense of 'mere morality' and ethics. For us, they are inseparable. Jesus' religion (and even the most completely unchurched among us cannot pretend to have derived nothing from him) was an ethical religion: we might almost say, his religion was religious ethics. Not that he preached what is called 'morality tinged with religious emotion'; God forbid! It was anything but that—a cold, heartless, calculating morality, an eagle with pinions bound, an angel with hands tied and eyes blindfolded. Nor was it religion plus morality, as if the two were fastened together like sticks, remaining distinct, separable, totally different in structure, and only joined together by arbitrary force. But his religion was ethical, and

his ethics religious, the ethics of faith, of religion; as closely knit together as the fruits of a tree and its trunk and branches.

A religion without morality was that of the ancient Roman thieves, who had their own professional god, and offered sacrifices in order to insure the success of their pillaging expeditions. It was not much of a religion. On the other hand, a morality without religion may be seen in Shakespeare's character Polonius, and in Lord Chesterfield, whose counsels to his son might be summed up in this, "Do as you please, but don't get caught and bring disgrace upon yourself and me." It was not a particularly moral kind of morality. It may be objected that morality minus religion may be better represented than by such examples. No doubt it may be; but it is difficult to draw a line and say, "Above this, religion; below it, morality." For we must remember that morality grew out of religion, historically. All men were more or less religious; and then along came the philosophers with their systematization of ethics. Even at the present day, the diffusion of religious ideas and beliefs is still so great that real temerity is required to declare that any man is not influenced by religion in his daily conduct. It may be quite unconscious; but even so, it is all the more real.

Thus religion, at least today, is impossible without morality. It cannot exist, nor persist, without it. And moreover religion—in the modern and Christian sense—is unattainable by the individual without morality. The immoral man simply cannot be religious, in the true and genuine sense. He has sold out to his lower, animal nature, and is henceforth unable to realize the capacities of his higher nature. If religion means the consciousness of God in control of one's life, it is obvious at once why this is so. This is the ancient message of Christianity, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions,

parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you plainly, even as I did tell you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians v. 19-21). Christ himself put his approval upon morality as an essential part of religious life. One day a certain ruler came to him and asked, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And he answered him not by demanding faith, or knowledge, or even adherence to the body of his followers; he simply said, "You already know the commandments." And when the man insisted that he had kept these from his youth up, Jesus gave him this final counsel of perfection, "One thing thou lackest yet [was it spiritual *freedom?*] sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor . . . and come, follow me." The first requirement was obedience to the moral law.

§ i

Just as it is wrong to discard ethics in favor of religion, as if the two were mutually exclusive, so it is a great mistake to ignore classical ethics in favor of Christian, as if the former were merely pagan or positively false. The greatest Christian teachers of the past did nothing of the sort. And the simple fact is that a large part of our ethics today, our common ideas of morality, are derived more or less directly from the ancient Greeks. Our modern Occidental world, Christian and non-Christian, is indebted to the old classical world as well as to Judaism for its ideas of morality. The ethical writers of the early and mediaeval Church simply took over the Platonic-Stoic ethics; just as Cicero took over the ethics of the Greek philosophers Panaetius and Posidonius, so Ambrose took over Cicero's. And if we ask the man, who wishes to live a 'moral' but not a 'religious' life, whence he derives his conceptions of morality, he can only answer, as a rule, if he

knows the answer, "From the ancient Greek ethics, taken over by Christianity and modified to some extent by Christian principles." Hence we cannot avoid the discussion of our common moral ideas as they were found at their historical source. They are by no means antiquated—especially if, with Thomas Arnold, we look upon Greece and Rome as not the closing periods of ancient history but the opening chapters of modern.

How far our prejudice against 'pagan ethics' has gone is apparent in the popular notion that Aristotle's golden mean was a kind of hypocrisy; that the Stoic ethics was a rigid discipline of self-restraint, ending naturally in suicide; that Plato's glorification of wisdom was that of the 'highbrow' or intellectual aristocrat. The desperate and sodden 'corruption' of the ancient world is calmly attributed to the impotence and worldliness of ancient ethics. But it can reasonably be said that this corruption—which was probably not much more sodden nor desperate than that of the world in which we live today—took place in spite of, not because of, the ethics of the great Greek and Roman teachers. A dozen other causes unite to account for it. Ethics, taking its rise in ancient Greece about the time of Socrates, was (and still is) but the slow and prolonged effort of humanity to rectify the wrongs of human life, and cure its own corruption. It is, next to Christianity, the most magnificent and inspiring development in all history. And, in fact, the earliest Christian teachers had the proper point of view when they recognized in Greek ethics and philosophy a kind of pre-Christian Christianity. No theological theory—such as the Fall of Man, or natural human depravity—should blind us to this patent fact.

The trouble is, we are content today with a smattering of knowledge, a few casual opinions, in the field of morals; and then we trust to 'common sense' to see us through. In no other field of human interest are modern men content with

so meagre an equipment of ideas. This 'common sense' view may be allowable as a principle of conduct consciously adopted, if anyone wishes to adopt it—though the chaotic confusion of moral ideas from which many persons today acknowledge that they suffer, ought to be a warning. But it is not particularly a religious principle, nor Christian, and it ignores the simple and solid fact that moral *education* is possible. The moral sense is just as capable of receiving instruction as is the intellect of man; and it has a growth and development just as real as that of his reasoning powers. Therefore, at the risk of seeming pedantic and queer, if nothing worse, we venture to counsel any man who is in earnest over religion to give himself to the consideration of ethics, of morality; and that with no view to wider knowledge merely, but for the sake of self-improvement. And we believe that earnest men today are anxious to cast off the burden of prejudice and ignorance, fastened upon their shoulders in the name of religion, and to face the problems and methods of moral behavior with clear-seeing eyes. We believe that men are anxious to hear ethics taught from the Christian pulpit: the teaching of righteousness, of justice and manliness, of prudence and temperance and self-control, as they are 'in Christ Jesus,' and with all the earnestness of the Christian preachers of the early Church.

It will be almost unbelievable, three or four centuries hence (if civilization survives to that date), that our age actually proscribed the teaching of ethics in the schools; that the Christian world in the twentieth century willingly relegated the science of right conduct to the upper stages of its college curriculums, where it enjoyed a precarious existence as an 'elective,' instead of putting it in the forefront of its popular education; that the art of human living was looked upon as something dull, uninteresting, academic, and abstruse; and that the Christian Church thought so little of the matter that

it made practically no effort either to alter the system or to supplement it from the pulpit. That this is not an unduly severe arraignment of the present situation will appear to anyone who casts up from his memory the number of sermons he has heard on the subjects of moral conduct, self-control, personal justice, fortitude, equanimity, or temperance (outside of its limited application to the liquor-evil). Or the number of lessons in Sunday School which had definitely to do with such principles of conduct, rather than with principles of belief, biblical traditions, missionary labors, or sacred biography.

No other century has ignored ethical education as we do today. Throughout the long 'dark' ages, morality was duly taught in the cloister schools. In the later middle ages, the recovery of Aristotle gave new life to ethical as well as to distinctly philosophical and theological thought and teaching. In the Renaissance, the ancient classical moralists renewed their influence upon men. Plutarch was the staple in every boy's education. The 'sceptic' Montaigne, the Catholic Francis de Sales, the Anglican Jeremy Taylor, all owed great debts to Plutarch and the classical teachers. Down almost to the present day, ethics has had a place in education, both religious and secular.

The man who sets out to live a religious life will find that it is not all 'religious,' in the rather narrow sense of that term as sometimes used. At least fifty percent of human life is conduct; and therefore conduct, as a part of human life, forms at least fifty percent of the content of religion! The control of life by the consciousness of God demands, and demands with no thought of compromise or settling the matter out of court and on easier terms, that the life so controlled be moral; that it be governed by principles which clearly distinguish right and wrong; that justice or righteousness, honesty and fair play, courage and self-control characterize

its behavior. When the consciousness of God actually governs a man's life, these virtues are more easily achieved than when a man struggles after them by himself; but this is simply because the God of whom a man is conscious, to whom he is attached, whom he loves and adores and by whose 'grace' he lives and gains the mastery, is the God of Righteousness, of Justice, of Courage and Self-control. We have had enough of the religion of easy emotionalism; we want a religion strong and virile, and a man's God rather than a God of slaves and weaklings. Hence a man starting out upon the religious life ought not to be satisfied until he has found a religion which takes full account of his sense of right and wrong, of duty, of moral obligation; for it will not be a lasting religion unless it has something to say on this score, and actually satisfies the demands of man's deep inner desire, his 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Upon this, Jesus and the classical moralists are agreed.

§ ii

There are two great sources of the moral ideas which have come down to the modern world out of the past. One is the preaching of the Hebrew prophets; the other, the philosophy of the ancient Greek and Graeco-Roman world. The former has come down to us not only in the writings which the prophets left behind them, now contained in the Old Testament, and in the ethical teachings of Judaism, but—what is more important—in the moral idealism of the prophets as revived and refined in the teaching of Jesus. The latter, the ethics of Greek philosophy, has spread more diffusely through the general culture of the mediaeval and modern world. Its influence upon Catholicism, and through Catholicism upon modern civilization, would supply the subject for a long and learned treatise. Earlier still, its influence upon the highest

religion of antiquity, the Jewish, is quite probable, and is an object of investigation by scholars at the present time. The form in which it spread over almost the whole of the Graeco-Roman world was—chiefly— the philosophy of the Stoics. And it is not impossible that Judaism in the time of Christ owed something of its high moral elevation to their influence. Christianity was by no means the first religion, nor was Judaism, to be influenced by this widespread philosophy which had gathered unto itself the best thought of the past and with it had penetrated into the remotest corners of the civilized world.

Stoicism was a school of philosophy, but it was a quite practical philosophy: its aim was not speculation so much as the positive and right guidance of human life, that is, conduct. Virtue, the Stoics held, alone makes men happy. Nevertheless, their motto was 'virtue for virtue's own sake,' for they did not admit the Epicurean principle that happiness is a legitimate goal of human endeavor. Virtue, or sound moral character, consists in more than the outward performance of virtuous deeds: it is to be found in the habitual inner disposition of the mind. Thus virtue is the source of the virtues, which they summarized in four: prudence (or practical wisdom), courage (or manliness), temperance (or self-control) and justice (or righteousness: we are more familiar with the word used in the New Testament). Zeno, the founder of the school, said that these four might be further reduced to one, the first and cardinal virtue, *wisdom*, or prudence.

There was nothing unique about this Stoic morality. It had been taught by Socrates and other teachers of earlier times. What the Stoics did was to set it forth in clear and unmistakable terms, discuss it and preach it constantly, and encourage men to make it their guide, adopting it as the object and end of the serious business of life. With the undermining and downfall of the old religions of Greece and Rome,

the Stoic philosophy became more and more the religion of the educated classes. Men entered the Stoic schools not simply to learn mathematics and physics and history, literature and music, or to prepare for a political career; they went there to learn the highest of all sciences, the science of living 'harmoniously,' i.e. in accordance with nature or the will of God. In Epictetus and Cicero, for example, this moral teaching was applied in the most explicit way to the needs and conditions of human life. There were Stoic chaplains in the great households and even in the armies. There were those who preached ethical religion on the street-corners, or wherever they could get a hearing. There is hardly a virtue that did not receive notice and exposition in this way. For perhaps the first time in history, groups of men banded together to cultivate the moral sense, to study virtue, to attain sound character, honesty, self-control, prudence in self-direction, temperance and fortitude and courage. They took themselves seriously in hand, and strove to remedy what was defective or lacking in themselves. One cannot read the record of this effort without a feeling of reverence for such sincerity, earnestness and high idealism. And we do not wonder that there are today men who find it a relief to turn from the emotional religion of the last two or three generations, with its somewhat hectic appeal to 'follow Christ,' and the seemingly unattainable ethics of the Gospel, to the calm, clear-sighted, purposeful setting-forth of the noble morality of these ancient teachers. And it would certainly do no harm if more study were given these wise old counsellors by Christian people generally.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the aims and ideas, the ethical scheme in general of the Stoics—and they represent to this day the highest conceivable ethics divorced as far as possible from organized religion—moved wholly within the sphere of the classical Greek conception of life: man needs only to

know what virtue is in order to practice it. This had been Socrates' constantly reiterated doctrine: "Know yourself—know the good—then follow it." Any man is a fool who allows his lower nature to overmaster him and rob him of his right to high and noble character. It seems simple enough, logical enough. We should lose patience with men who knew perfectly well what was right, and yet persisted in doing wrong. "When the good appears, it immediately attracts to itself; the evil repels from itself. But the soul will never reject the manifest appearance of the good, any more than persons will reject Caesar's coin. On this principle depends every movement both of man and God." [1]

Whether or not this is so, is a matter to be verified or disproved in our own experience. Is it a fact that the good is irresistible? Is it sufficient to know the good, to be able to distinguish the good from the evil? Here is the crux of the moral problem; the ideals are well enough, but what of the performance? And here also is the region of the vital connection between religion and morality: here is where the need for religion becomes most apparent.

## § iii

Let us take a classical example. The greatest figure in early Christianity, next to Jesus, is St. Paul. He owes his place very largely to the fact that, although a strict and—certainly in intention—an orthodox Jew, he was reared in a Gentile atmosphere, and was thus able to bridge over the gulf between primitive Jewish Christianity and the world of Gentile, pagan religious life. It is possible, though not altogether probable, that he knew at first hand something of the Stoic philosophy and the ethical religion being preached to the masses by itinerant moralists.

At any rate, he was a thorough Jew; and Judaism had an

ethical system comparable (if not to some degree dependent upon) that of the Greek world. Its principle was not quite so autonomous and individualistic as the Greek one, "Know the good and do it." It was based upon a sacred Law, which revealed the will of God to men: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good"—yet it also taught men to depend upon the grace or help of God through faith. And it had built up an environment of virtue, of piety, a homelike atmosphere of devotion to the highest ideals of conduct, through the practice of the ancestral religion. Every Jew had in consequence a predilection for right conduct. His religion was moral, and it gave him strength to live a moral life. Herein is one of the first outstanding values of religion for morality: it supplies an environment, through Church and home, which is not only self-perpetuating, but which makes virtue easy and natural. The child grows up in an atmosphere where the very best is expected of him; in later life this never leaves him—he expects it of himself, and he is conscious that God expects it of him also.

Judaism was a religion of revelation. Instead of having to inquire within himself, the Jew learned 'the good' from his teachers, as they had learned it from the sacred Law. The traditional ethical system of Judaism was based nominally upon the Old Testament, and especially upon the Law. Thus Paul learned it. He knew the Law, which was 'holy and righteous and good.' But through the Law he also knew something else: "I had not known sin, except through the Law; for I had not known coveting, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet." That is, he knew what sin was when he set out to keep the Law, and discovered that he was breaking it repeatedly and continually. And so the commandment, which should have been 'unto life,' he actually found to be 'unto death.' His greatest stumbling-block was apparently that one command, "Do not covet." We do not know just

how Paul interpreted the command. Like the other commands of the Law, this had been enlarged in scope and deepened in significance before Paul's time in somewhat the same way as Jesus deepened the Law in his Sermon on the Mount. For Paul, it may have been widened out into an equivalent of the Brahmanic rule of life, "Kill out desire." Or it may have represented the Stoic *ataraxia*, apathy, mastery of the world through the mastering of one's own desires, unmovedness by passion. At any rate, he found the rule quite impossible to observe. As he sadly relates, in his Letter to the Romans, "I was alive apart from the Law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died!" What was needed was not more knowledge of the good, more self-discipline, more schooling in the virtues. In the face of this one command he stumbled and fell, and succumbed to defeat. What was needed was a remedy radical and regenerating, to go through his whole nature and remake it, a power to revive and restore the weakened will, and bring his whole self into subjection to the Law, 'holy and righteous and good' as it was—in brief, to effect the control of life by the rule of the good. For although he knew well enough what was right, he found that, strive as he would, he did not do it; and that which he abhorred, that he did. "For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"—Here was a problem indeed, for the ancient moralists! Here was a keen and penetrating mind, a devoted heart, a soul given enthusiastically to the practice of the highest law, rendered impotent and useless by a realization of the futility of all his efforts to get the upper hand, to carry through, to win out, to achieve the victory. Here was a soul well-nigh lost—like many another religious and

artistic genius of our race—in pessimism and despair. "Not what I would do I practise; but what I hate, that I do!"

Then came the great deliverance. Not through any further tuning-up of the already breaking controls; not through a last heroic spurt and dash to the goal; not through a harsh ascetical beating-down of the desires of the flesh; but through a power which came from without, renewing his whole nature, bringing him into harmony, a power so vast and so real that he has no other name for it than the Spirit of God. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. The mind of the Spirit is life and peace." The eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is one soaring paean of victory over the 'mind of the flesh' wherein sin resides; his divided self is replaced by a self at peace, in control, and at unity with itself. He is free! All his ethical teaching, so misunderstood and misrepresented then and since, leaps and bounds with this glorious sense of freedom. For this freedom, 'the freedom of the sons of God,' is given him in the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." "And if Christ is in you—that is the same thing as being 'in the Spirit' or 'led by the Spirit'—the body is dead because of sin. It is the old 'body of this death' from which he longed to be delivered, the 'flesh of sin,' which has died and passed entirely away, because of its sins. But the spirit—which always delighted in the Law of God—is life because of righteousness."

To this day, we have not much more than begun to enter into the new world of freedom which Paul discovered and mapped out in his own experience as recorded in the Epistle to the Romans. Nevertheless, the history of Christianity is the unending narrative of experiences like St. Paul's, of weak men made strong through the Spirit given them, of divided and shipwrecked lives made whole and sound and safe again, of despair turned into glorious victory, of defeat giving way

to conquest. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. . . ." "Nevertheless, the Spirit of God helpeth our infirmities. . . ." "Out of weakness we are made strong." This is the consistent testimony of serious men who speak simply what they know at first hand, something found to be true in their own lives.

Paul's ethics is the ethics of the new life in Christ and in the Spirit. It is as such that he definitely teaches it: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Galatians v. 22-23). It may perhaps appear that these are not all virtues appropriate for positive effort at cultivation, and that St. Paul did not mean them as such. They are the 'fruits,' the outward manifestations of the new life, of the new-found possession of the Spirit within. But it is to rate them at only half their value if they are interpreted as having nothing to do with the man's effort to live by the Spirit. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh," says St. Paul immediately before this passage.

Thus Paul's ethics is a religious ethics, like that of Jesus; but its underlying religious principle is different. Paul's principle is the possession of the Spirit, the power that makes for righteousness and peace and newness of life; Jesus' principle is rather the social one of preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Thus Jesus praises the poor in spirit, the mourners (or penitent), the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted; he asks of men simplicity and singleness of purpose, humility, forgiveness, love. Nevertheless, it is evident that the virtues taught by Paul are no innovation upon the teaching of Jesus. When Paul writes, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love," we know that the Spirit of which he speaks elsewhere is indeed the Spirit of Christ.

But do we find here anything to remind us of the ethics of the great Hellenic teachers? How could the early Fathers take so easily to the Stoic system, unless it had some affinities with the New Testament?

Undoubtedly we do find something in common between the older Greek and the new Christian ideal of virtue. Take the beatitude of Jesus, "Blessed are the meek," or what Paul says of gentleness, kindness, and longsuffering. Aristotle had long before written upon the virtue of *praotês*, but it had never bulked as largely in the Greek system as in the Christian; the ideas were in reality much the same, but the emphasis was wholly different. For Christianity not only found an ethical value in gentleness singularly greater than Stoicism ever found, but found in it also a tremendous social value; moreover, it found here a religious value of quite paramount nature. Take Cicero's definition of justice: "The chief province of justice is, that no person injure another, unless he is provoked by suffering wrong." Jesus on the other hand is speaking of this very thing and says, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees [the current legal system, as they interpreted it], ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." But instead of defining righteousness, in the manner of the scribes and Pharisees, or even of the philosophers, he deserts the idea point-blank, and says, "You have heard the ancient law of revenge, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smites you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven!" The virtues step out of their rigid classifications, and justice is crowned with gentleness.

Or take the virtue of forgiveness. There was something of this in the Stoic scheme, but not much. Instead, the virtuous

man was counselled to endure wrongs, tolerate evil, for the sake of his own peace of mind, his *aequanimitas*. But Christianity insisted upon the out-and-out forgiveness of the offender. There was, of course, a tremendous social value in this: it permitted the wounds of personal animosities and enmities to be healed over, it made renewal of social life possible in spite of war and injustice, once they were past. But its chief value was the religious. Our own standing in God's sight depends upon the forgiveness of others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew vi. 14-15).

However, it is not in isolated details that the relation of morality to religion, or, to speak historically, of Greek ethics to Christianity, is to be seen. It is not even in the different examples which were set before their followers for imitation, as if the example of Christ—quite different from the perfect Wise Man or philosopher—marked the distinction in character, and the words, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," marked the difference in rule. The difference is rather in the whole approach, the whole attitude to life. As St. Paul said, it is a new spirit of life which enters in and takes possession of a man, remaking him, changing his whole inner life, creating him anew. A modern teacher of philosophy has defined it in words worth remembering: "Religion rises above morality in this, that whilst the ideal of morality is only progressively realized, the ideal of religion is realized here and now. In that act which constitutes the beginning of the religious life—call it faith, or trust, or self-surrender, or by whatever name you will—there is involved the identification of the finite with a life which is eternally realized. It is the elevation of the spirit into a region where hope passes into certitude, struggle into conquest, interminable effort and endeavor into peace and rest." [2]

Briefly stated, St. Paul's experience represents *the solution of religion applied to the problem of moral life:* for the moral problem receives not a moral but a religious solution. And it is another example of victory through surrender, described above. At the end of an ineffectual struggle, in which every energy of the moral nature is brought to bear on the task in hand, only to find itself impotent, crushed beneath a burden which cannot be removed, and threatened with destruction, the soul cries out for help to a power vastly greater than itself. The power comes; God takes charge of the situation; the man is saved, and his moral nature, with all its energies, is filled with new strength, his heart beats firm once more, he is full of confidence, he has found newness of life.

But is such an experience, of which St. Paul's is the classic example, in any sense normative for the religious or the Christian life? Are there not natures which never require to pass through such a process of spiritual turmoil?—Undoubtedly there are. Such are those who have lived near to God all along, perhaps not even realizing it very clearly; or those whose lives have been somewhat sheltered from the storm, like boats which ply about the shores of some protected bay, and have never ventured upon the broad ocean in the teeth of its gales and hurricanes. It is only natural that natures like that of St. Augustine, who ran the gamut of sin before surrendering to the will of God, and those of Channing and Keble, Phillips Brooks and Father Damien, require entirely different solutions of the problem of moral life.

Yet there are literally millions of persons who have entered into fulness of life only through the tragic process of struggle, defeat, succor and victory. For them salvation involved the break-up of their former sinful character, and the building up of the new, whose principles are derived from without or from above—outside themselves, at least—and made effectual 'through the Spirit.' It is not the same thing

as conversion from a life of gross sin to a life of righteousness. They were living a life of righteousness 'in the mind,' as Paul says; but the rest of their nature was serving 'the law of sin.' They knew the right, yet did it not. But apparently it was by no failure of effort on their part that eternal disaster stared them in the face. So far as we know, no other member of the apostolic band, certainly not one of the immediate disciples of Jesus, ever faced such a situation, or passed through such an experience. St. Paul's experience was isolated, as far as we know, in early Christianity; and yet there must have been many of whom we do not know, whose religion was more inarticulate, whose secret struggles never were divulged, but who were able to understand what St. Paul meant in his famous Epistle. And there have been, as we have said, millions of such souls in the course of the Christian centuries. For them, the 'twice-born,' we need not hesitate to say, St. Paul's experience was and still is normative: their own words are sufficient testimony to the fact.

But has the experience of St. Paul no value save for persons so constituted that they can renew their strength only by a method of spiritual crisis, through inner catastrophe and rescue? Has it no meaning for the souls of the simple, the 'once-born,' aliens by birth from the commonwealth of the dramatically redeemed, who never have been plucked as brands from the burning? It has at least this meaning: that a sanction or guarantee is thus placed upon the higher powers of the Spirit, so that we can recognize and trust His working in souls more complex, more grievously burdened, more vexed and troubled than our own. It is not necessary for me to have experienced every possible torture of conscience, every throe of 'conviction,' every rapture of regeneration in order to realize that the same Spirit, the same God, whom in my quieter and perhaps narrower experience I have come to know and trust, is mighty to save such a soul as St. Paul from

futility and ruin. His more delicately framed nature was able to respond to promptings and moods of which many of us —perhaps most—are practically incapable. And it is well for Christianity that such a person appeared in the first generation of believers: for he brought the message of salvation home to multitudes of sick souls who might otherwise never have known the influence of Christ and the power of the Gospel. Through his own experience he propagated the Christian religion in a region of religious psychology which otherwise might have remained long in darkness, wherein dwelt many oppressed souls under the blinding shadow of despair, 'having no hope, and without God in the world.' His greatest title heretofore has been, The Apostle to the Gentiles; but what it really should be is, The Apostle to the Despairing, to the Potentially Twice-Born.

It is almost as if St. Paul endured the agonies of a second atoning Cross, not this time for the sins of the world, but for its doubts: as if he wrought out in his struggles the redemption of the souls of those men in whom conscience is uppermost, but who find in themselves a stark impotence to fulfill and make effective what they know to be right and the will of God. Paul himself called the process crucifixion, and said he was 'crucified along with Christ': not that the weird dream of a second sacrifice for the sins of men ever entered his mind —his sacrifice was lost in the sacrifice of Christ, with which it was one; his atonement was only the atonement of Christ, not so much brought over and applied to him as *including* him, even from the first; his union with Christ through the Spirit went back, ideally, to the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which, although an event in the past, took place not so much in time as in eternity—such was Paul's mystical view of the Messiah's death.

For us it means a demonstration of the Spirit's power. Just as Jesus wrought out to the full the capacities for goodness,

truth, self-sacrifice which we believe are latent in us all—only we are hindered by other interests and considerations, sins and habits, from their full development—so Paul carried out to its final and extreme form the struggle against despair, and the victorious overcoming of the divided self and broken will, which all of us share in some degree and at various times.

In a similar way, we pause for a moment to behold the glory of a sunrise. For only the briefest space we are thrilled with a sense of the sublime; a strange feeling of the eternity of beauty or of our own insignificance comes over us; we are overwhelmed with the impulse to adore. But in a moment it is gone. Only the poet or the artist carries out the mood, 'catches' it, as we say, and restrains its passing long enough to gather something of its glory into his work. He sees no sunrise merely, but a whole new world, freshly created before his eyes. And because his genius is such that he not only sees, but can also repeat what he sees, we are enabled to enter into his experience after him, realizing that we too saw it all —yet saw it not! So we see, wrought out in Paul, the struggle for freedom, for moral autonomy, for character, and the satisfaction of the demands of our ethical sense; we see his failure and collapse; we see his rescue and recovery, his restoration to poise and vigor and newness of life. The story is personal, and yet timeless in its meaning. If psychology had myths, as the earlier sciences had, St. Paul's story might easily become one. It is told with epical simplicity and directness, but it has all the power of tragedy.

And it is this quality, no doubt, which chiefly impresses us. It is the demonstration of the Spirit's power which men cherish in this narrative. And it is the demonstration of the power of that selfsame Spirit whom we already know, and trust for daily life. That far sea, remote from our everyday travel, has now been explored and charted; we know that it is there, and we have the chart of it at hand. We expect never

to voyage those distant and unfamiliar waters. There is safe sailing enough where we go now. But nevertheless, if some day our ship is carried far from her course, we not only have the chart with us, we not only know where the rocks are, and the shoals; but we have also learned of the mystical breeze which comes up in the midst of that sea's deadest calms; and we trust we shall be able to navigate in safety. We are ourselves the better-provided mariners for knowing of those seas which our own eyes shall never scan. And it is possible too that we shall be able to help other voyagers—whom necessity drives forth, like Ulysses of old, to the restless plowing of that deep.

§ v

The question with which we started out, "Can a man be moral without being religious?" must be most positively answered, Yes. But the question which we did not ask, the converse of this, "Can a man be religious without being moral?" must with equal positiveness be answered, No. For religion, at least the highest religion that we know, the Christian, includes morality, as the greater contains the less. So essential is morality to religion that if a man would be religious he cannot begin better than by taking the fullest cognizance of his moral life, studying his own motives, studying higher and better motives, making himself acquainted with the machinery of life which is at his disposal, studying its uses and ends, and inquiring whether or not his own moral mechanism is achieving its end and functioning as it should. But also, so essential is religion to the highest and best morality that if a man will take the moral problem seriously, even his own moral problem, he will discover the need for God as did Socrates and Plato and Epictetus and many another ancient moralist. Religion will then become a more compelling and

vital reality to him; it will be less an inheritance from the past and more a discovery of his own. The most genuine seriousness of effort to attain virtue is first necessary if the religious life, to which it ought naturally to lead, is to be full and rich and dominant. In how many instances may the decline of religious life be traced to neglect of the primary demand of moral health, of righteousness! "Seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things—choice graces of the religious life, unshaken faith, answers to prayer, the rarer fruits of the Spirit—shall be added unto you."

Along with the neglect of the primary demand of moral character, of truth, sincerity, and honest effort to live by the clearest light a man is vouchsafed, goes the unfortunate impression that morality, a thing to be stated chiefly in contrast to religion, is cold and feelingless, without ardor or warmth. But this is a great mistake. "The moral life is not a passionless life. Benevolence, patriotism, heroism, philanthropy, are not the unemotional pursuit of abstractions, virtues which live in a vacuum. The noblest moral natures, the men who live most and do most for mankind, are not strangers to feeling, untouched by the desires and passions that move the common heart. On the contrary, their very greatness is often due, in part at least, to the keenness and quickness of their susceptibilities, to the intensity of that original element of impulse and feeling which is the natural basis of their spiritual life." [3] This is sufficient to indicate the falsity of that definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion." For the best morality is already touched, and more than touched, is fired and flaming with emotion. The spirit of life is in it, 'that original element of impulse and feeling which is the natural basis of the spiritual life.' The difference is found in this: that religion brings the power of God to bear on a man's life, whereas morality is engaged with the pursuit and effort to

attain to virtue without primary regard to God's will or power, determination or support. Even in the case of St. Paul, his Jewish morality, though determined by the revealed will of God to the fathers in the Old Testament, was centred in his own will to obey, to satisfy the demands of God. It was not until the Spirit took possession of him, and his moral problem received its solution by means of religion, that the power of God, the help and support of God became the primary and fundamental thing. His life then passed under the domination of something else than his own will to righteousness, something other and yet working only the more powerfully still toward righteousness, namely his direct and immediate consciousness of God, and the activity of the Spirit of God within him and possessing him.

The difficulty with most appeals for more ethical teaching in the Church is that they are conjoined with appeals to be rid of 'doctrine.' But it is by no means certain that the two are mutually exclusive and incompatible. For 'doctrine' means simply *teaching*, nothing more nor less. And this may be moral or it may be religious, and it may be both. "This ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone"—such is the true solution. And it was so effected by the great teachers of the earliest years of Christian history. But if by 'doctrine' theology is meant, or the theories of salvation, of atonement, election and probation, which our forefathers spun out at length in their more leisurely days, it may briefly and truly be stated that preachers today are not preaching 'doctrine.' And yet the plainest statement of the principles of Christian faith that can possibly be made is still a statement of principles which have a bearing on morals: such bearing as religious principles necessarily have, however indirectly, upon morals.

But we are by no means pessimistic. It is the revived ethical sense of the Church today which will be, in the end, its

salvation. We ought to listen patiently to the endless homiletic discussions of Reconstruction, the League of Nations, the Pillars of Peace, and Social Justice. For the Church is only finding itself once more, adjusting itself to the new situation. We may speak of the tendencies and movements of today as predominantly 'social'; but what we really mean is that an enlargement of our ethical field is taking place. Social movements are always 'social,' no more so today than ever before; large and widespread tendencies in the world are always 'social.' And the Church, which is today adopting its 'social' outlook as something new, is merely becoming aware of its duty to the world, and is endeavoring to measure up to the height of its responsibility.

For the Church must once more teach the nations *virtue*. She did this once, in the two centuries preceding her greatest triumph in the ancient world. Though Stoics and Cynics and other teachers had created a general atmosphere of moral idealism, at least in many quarters, to which the Church fell heir, and which materially aided her in her work, yet she did not scorn the lowly task of offering 'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.' Today, no comparable extra-ecclesiastical force is at work in the world—except perhaps in communist Russia. The moral ideas of many men about us are chaos. Society is face to face with the brutal and elemental in human nature, forces which may not simply retard its evolution and the already slow approach to equilibrium, but may actually overthrow it. We remember how we talked during the last war of the danger of extinction which civilization then faced. The danger is even greater today. It is the Church's task and opportunity to bring to the world at large the best that she has; to undertake in the most straightforward and direct way to inculcate the basic principles of morality, of righteousness; to insist that the schools shall teach boys and girls how to live as well as how

to get a living; above all, to bring with her the ancient and priceless glory of her heritage: the solution of the problem of life, the curing of its ills, through the practice of religion, through the power of God unto salvation brought to bear upon such difficulties and dangers in life as the natural force of men cannot remove or conquer.

The principles of right and wrong; of justice—industrial, commercial, political, international, as well as personal and individual; the inviolable sacredness of the home, and with it of the marriage-tie, the duty of child-bearing and child-rearing where nature and oppressive poverty do not forbid; these, which are among the basic principles of morality, of social and personal righteousness, let the Church expound with patient wisdom and untiring diligence to the sons of men in the present generation. Let her become once more the Teacher of Righteousness to the nations, as she was for a thousand years through the middle ages.

The ethical values of Christianity are in fact transcendent. If only Christians themselves could realize it, instead of scorning ethics as many do, as if it belonged to a lower level than religion! Whereas, at least in Christianity, ethics are essentially inseparable from religion. It is when we put morality first, and not our ecclesiastical or metaphysical theories; when 'justice, and mercy, and the love of God,' which Jesus described as 'the weightier matters of the law'; when courage, manliness, prudence, self-control, honesty, faithfulness, gentleness, forgiveness, humility, love—it is when these are put in the forefront of religion, in theory and in practice, that religion itself becomes vital and real, gains in power, comes with dynamic and irresistible energies into control of our lives. The ancient rule still holds: "Seek first God's Kingdom *and His righteousness*, and all things else, needful or of value, shall be added."

## CHAPTER V

# *Religion as a Personal Relation*

EVERYONE TODAY recognizes that religion, to be real, must be 'personal.' What this catch-word means, usually, is that religion is not an impersonal system, like a science, which carries with it its own authentication, and is demonstrably true without regard to the mind and heart, the tastes and personal characteristics of the investigator. In contrast, religion is 'personal.' It cannot exist outside persons. It is conditioned everyway by the mind and heart and personality of the religious man, i.e. the man who possesses or professes religion. And this is quite true. Any religious organization, any religious theory, which ignores or denies this fact is bound in the long run to fail.

This is implied in almost any definition of religion which may be attempted: it is so with the definition which we have suggested in an earlier chapter. If religion means life centred in God, ruled and regulated by the consciousness of God, then God must be personal: and religion is the relation of two persons at least, God and myself. For I cannot centre my life in, bring my life under the control of, any material thing (which is less real than myself!), or any impersonal system of principles and forces. Only a personal being—as real as myself, and likewise personal—is adequate. God, if He be our God, must inevitably be personal, for we are 'personal' beings, we are persons.

### § i

But God is invisible, intangible; and therefore He seems to many of us too remote for personal knowledge and rela-

tionship. At least, He seems to be wholly outside, albeit 'above,' the pale of intimacy, such as will be required if human life is to be governed by conscious relationship to Him. How can we find God, and come to know Him? This is the next great question which confronts the man earnestly setting out to lead a religious life.

The unanimous answer to this question given by religious men in all ages is that we know God by faith. That is, it is not by speculation but by an act of will, in which we *take something for granted* and launch out confidently, assuming—as the Bible says—'that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him' (Hebrews xi. 6). There is nothing in the least passive about faith: it is an act —or a sustained activity—the very highest activity of the soul. It is far from being a gentle and sentimental credulity. A false note is struck in the theory, to which most religious men do not assent, that faith is the gift of God, and may accordingly be imposed upon a nature whose will is set anywhere but upon God and righteousness. The falsity arises from confusion of terms, and from giving to the term 'faith' a substantive rather than an active meaning. The request of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith"—if such a request is answerable at all—was something quite other if it meant, "Increase the number of our beliefs, make it easier for us to accept the doctrines imposed by religious authority," than if it meant, "Strengthen our wills to live 'as seeing Him who is invisible,' inspire us to commit our destiny, all that we have and are, to the best we know in the universe—whom we call God." It is significant that the demand of the Pharisees and of the populace, and apparently here also of the disciples, for signs and proofs as helps to faith, was consistently refused by Jesus. "Faith which is seen—which rests upon proof—is no more faith!"

But is such an act irrational? Is it contrary to reason, or is it wholly outside the sphere of reason? It is neither.

One thing that is characteristic and remarkable about the religion of today is the small number of books which are written on the subject of 'doubt,' and of 'faith versus reason.' Books like *The Gospel for an Age of Doubt,* published toward the end of last century, were but the last of a long line, whose earlier representatives, attempting some 'short and easy method with doubt,' 'the refutation of scepticism,' and so on, today clutter the shelves of unwary second-hand booksellers. A change has come over our philosophy of religion, even that of the commonest 'common man'; and a new attitude to life robs such apologetic of its leverage and power. Dr. Van Dyke's book was itself one of those which marked the turning-point. Instead of looking upon 'doubt' as a negative system of unbeliefs set over against the positive system of beliefs which faith represented, somewhat as the kingdoms of light and darkness were set in opposition in the thought of ancient times (assuming that darkness was as real a force as light), today most men recognize that doubt or scepticism is simply an attitude, a mood, a spirit of questioning, a way of attacking the situations of life which comes easiest to a certain unhappy minority of human beings. It is given too great a semblance of reality and power when all the productions of this mood are classed under one head, and labelled the system of Modern Doubt. It is not something which can be met with logical arguments. The quixotic defenders of the faith who went out to attack it may not have used the wrong weapons, but their strategy was mostly a *tour de force.* Such apologetic was not particularly false: it was merely futile.

Far from doubt being inimical to religion, it is indispensable to it—just as the Intelligence Office is indispensable to an army. Religion requires to be guarded from superstition: this is the function of a sound and keen-eyed scepticism. Faith must be kept free from fanaticism, the intellect must be exercised with a reasonable humility of temper to do its best work, the moral life must be kept free from pride. Here

scepticism does perhaps its finest work, in self-criticism, in a proper balancing of self-reliance and self-distrust. For the rational life, both faith and scepticism have their functions. Reason is not opposed to faith: for reason in a sense includes faith. The most rational response in the world, the most thoroughly reasonable reaction, to the age-long feeling that God must somehow be—or the feeling that "There are gods hereabout," of which the ancients spoke—is to set out in faith to find Him. And it is not as if seeking God in faith meant acting without any grounds for confidence. There are signs, indications, suggestions, hints of the Greater Reality, even though its whole has not yet been revealed to us. Faith means self-committal, trust, launching-out in confidence, the act of taking something or someone for granted plus the further act of proceeding upon such an assumption. But faith is not blind. There are indications, suggestions, which it is the work of the intellect to weigh and consider. They may not be proofs, but they are grounds of probability, sufficient to indicate that we may trust ourselves to God.

It is said that Columbus's sailors threatened to mutiny shortly before land was sighted on his voyage to the New World. Their natural fear of falling off into the abyss once they came to the ocean's edge, not to mention the reputed sea-monsters likely to be met in the distant waters of the West, were too much for their weak spirits. But just as the muttered threat of mutiny was about to become an open cry, "Chain the captain and put about for home," they saw birds flying overhead, and discovered grass and leaves floating in the sea. Here were hints and indications for the intellect to deal with: the reasonable conjecture was that land lay before them. Nevertheless it required a persistence of the same faith, which had led them thus far on their voyage, to *act* upon this probability and steer their course bravely on. It was probability in the first instance which had led Columbus on his voyage:

the probability that the earth is round, and that a directer route to the Indies lay across the uncharted western ocean; but it was faith which acted upon this probability. It is true that 'probability is the guide of life,' as Bishop Butler held; nevertheless man has to act upon the probability, or it gets him nowhere, and he is shut up in a world of half-truths, conjectures, guesses; and to act upon probability is to exercise what in religious language is called faith. God never requires of any man that he shall sacrifice his intellect in order to preserve his faith: as well amputate his head to save his heart! But God demands, i.e. it is the law of life, that if a man wishes to come out of the region of conjecture and uncertainty, he must take the probability which his reason furnishes him *and act upon it*. God 'hath not left himself without witness,' as Paul testified. The testimony must and can be handled only by the intellect, with as careful consideration and pondering as a man can possibly give. But once the testimony is gone over and reviewed, it is simply irrational not to act upon it, to pass the sentence, to execute it, to abide by the verdict of reason itself. Thus the ancient promise of the Gospel and the dictates of common-sense are at one: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God—and therefore assuredly true—or whether I speak it from myself—and therefore possibly false" (John vii. 17).

But how few may these indications become, and a man still be enabled to exercise faith? A man may feel that there are not sufficient indications, or 'suggestions,' for him to do one thing or another. Nevertheless, the paucity of the evidence does not excuse him from passing judgment; it merely makes the case more difficult. If there are not many and overwhelming testimonies, then we must take such as there are, and make the best of them; no one can do anything else. A judge at law might throw the case out of court for lack of

evidence; but this is a matter of life and death—to which a 'case' in the hands of a physician would be more closely parallel; something must be *done*. The indications may seem few in number and of no great significance. But all the keener then should be our examination of them.

If I cannot trust God, if I cannot bring myself to self-committal upon the venture of faith in a Living Person animating nature and governing the world, I will not therefore give up faith altogether. For I still trust Goodness, and Virtue, and Righteousness. I ask myself, Is righteousness still the best thing in the world? Is goodness still worth striving for, whether or not there is One whom men call God, whether or not I can ever come to know Him, whether or not I myself have an immortal life ahead of me? It may seem to me impossible that God is Love, in such a universe as this; nevertheless I ask, Do I still believe that love is the best thing in my life, and in the lives of men and women about me, the greatest thing in the world as I know it? If I can answer affirmatively, I will be content; I will stick to this, my faith, poor and weak as it is in comparison with the faith of many other men. And it will be *faith* with me, not reason or probability; I will advance beyond that stage, and positively *trust* my life to the truth of what I affirm: I will commit myself in all loyalty to Goodness, Virtue, Love and Righteousness, and my life shall be guided by these as if they were gods, or God.

If a man can make such a creed for himself, and act upon it, his friends need not despair of him; he 'is not far from the Kingdom.' If a man is sufficiently in earnest to begin, it does not matter much where he begins; all roads lead to the City. Time will tell. The way grows clearer as a man ascends with it into the region of light: it 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Faith is not a fixed quantity, to be appropriated once for all by 'the submission of the intellect,' as

unintelligent religious guides once used to say. It is a growth. And as you act more and more in faith, your faith grows stronger; it gains power with use, like the strength of the muscles or the vision of the eye.

§ ii

We cannot proceed far in treating of religion as personal before we come face to face with the person of Jesus Christ. His religion is the one which most widely influences our modern world, certainly as far as its underlying religious ideas go. And he stands in a different relation to his followers from that in which other religious founders stand to theirs. Though each has left his stamp upon the religion bearing his name, Jesus is looked upon as more than a personal influence, the ideal and perfect type of character, inspiring his followers to imitation. For Christianity, the idea of a personal God, and of religion as a personal relationship, is bound up with the deity of Christ.

There are more persons today who believe in the deity of Christ than there are who recite the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds—and that is not altogether because of the antiquated character of those creeds. As a matter of practical religion, as a factor of faith in actual operation, it is probably true that the vast majority of us here in America and in Europe think of God in terms of Christ. This may even include those who reject the Christian doctrine. It is only natural that this is so. For between twenty and fifty generations, or since our European ancestors emerged from heathenism, the controlling idea of God, at least among Latin, Celtic, Teutonic, Slavic and Scandinavian peoples, has been that of the Christian Church.

And within this lies a still deeper reason. Virtually all that we know of God, as Christians, we know through Christ. We know little of God *a priori* and beforehand. But we know

enough to enable us to recognize Him as revealed in Christ. This is a matter of practical faith. What we know of God we know almost wholly through Christ. And the belief in his divinity simply does *not* rest upon any such basis of rationalization as the following: (*a*) God is known to possess certain characteristics or powers or attributes; (*b*) these we see present without diminution in Christ, in his holy character, in his ministry replete with miracles, in his supernatural birth and resurrection; (*c*) therefore, Christ is God. It is rather far more true to fact to say, (*a*) We do not know much about God; but (*b*) what we positively do know, comes to us almost entirely from Christ. And (*c*) if we know God —as we really do—it is mainly through Christ that we know Him. If anyone asks what we know of God, and whom we know Him to be, we point simply and naively to Christ and say, Here is God. It is not enough to say, He is like God; for there cannot be two characters of God; if they are alike, and one is God, then both are one, both are God. The two melt into one, so to speak; it is impossible to think them separately, at least for most of us.[1]

No doubt there are, as we said, indications of God in nature. We look into the starry depths about us and behold the work of His hands; we look into the microscopic world of life around us and see the delicate, perfect fashioning of an infinite skill; we look to the spirit of man and find capacities, abilities, which are not self-created. This is God's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Yes; but is it the same God whose volcanoes belch forth destruction and death to the inhabitants of the earth, Pelee and Vesuvius and Mauna Loa? Is it the same God whose wisdom permitted the vast tragedy of two Great Wars to drag their loathsome and debasing length across human civilization, crushing the innocent, debauching the pure, beating out the life of free men and women and children? What of the *character* of this God? What does He think of

all this? How are you sure that He is just and good and loving?

The only answer to these staggering questions is that, nevertheless, justice and goodness and love are the best things we know in the universe. God cannot be less than what He has made. And if there are injustice and vice and hatred in the world, as there undeniably are, then another explanation must be found for their presence here than that they exist because God wills them. For despite all the vice and crime and destruction in the world, I cling still to my good God made manifest in the noblest human lives I know, and supremely in the life of Jesus Christ. And this is the God in whom, in the western world, the vast and overwhelming majority of men today, whether consciously or not, believe: not the wild and immoral Being who might be argued from the phenomena of savage Nature, but the God of goodness and love made manifest in Jesus Christ.

To this somewhat metaphysical argument may be added a moral one. There are doubtless many men today who never say the Creed, yet who weigh the moral values of life in terms of Jesus Christ. It is no standard of self-made laws by which they measure conduct: it is the figure of Jesus Christ which rises before them, accusing them of their sins. In him are united the ideals of supreme strength and supreme gentleness which the highest chivalry in human hearts instinctively recognizes. He stands alike for the noblest self-control and the divinest self-sacrifice for others. It is not the metaphysical deity of Christ to which men give their allegiance today half so much as it is his practical and moral deity. And it can hardly be said that the man who is ready to offer his life in sacrifice, who is willing to stake his all upon the truth of Christ's teaching, is not a believer in the deity of Christ. He may not recognize it himself. He may think of Christ only as the cloud-haloed figure of ancient Byzantine creeds. But if it is

in the Gospel of Christ, or even in the Gospel about Christ—the man in whom the goodness and loving kindness of God are made manifest—that he finds the ideal to which he unreservedly dedicates his life, then he practically believes in Christ as God. Christ is his God, whether he recognizes it or not. It is the God who has set his face against all that is evil in the world, against sin in the man's own heart, and in society at large, who calls men to allegiance and loyalty in the battle against oppression, selfishness, injustice, vice, and all things hateful. It is a thorough mistake to measure the 'decline' of faith in our day by the difficulties which many persons have with the ancient Christian theology. Rather we ought to measure its increase by the degree of conscious self-dedication to the moral and spiritual values in the Gospel, which that theology simply shadowed forth in metaphysical terms for an age interested in theological speculation. Christ is God for our age in a new and genuine and most sacred sense. And he has his martyrs today, even as in the days when men staked their lives for the truth of theological subtleties.

§ iii

But is it not irrational to believe in Christ as God, even in this 'moral' and 'practical' sense? After all, we mean more by the word 'God' than a human being, or an ideal of spiritual and moral character. Why call Christ God, unless it adds something of dignity or meaning or value to our devotion? And how, in a world which science has found to be uniform in its processes, can an Incarnation of Deity ever have taken place? Is it not contrary to logical thought to suppose that God became man?

It is true that the sciences labor after closed systems. Philosophy undertakes to *comprehend* life, to enclose it in some 'universal' concept or formula—just as in morality the Stoics

brought all right conduct under the heading of 'conformity to nature.' The maxim that "the world is made of atoms and ether, and there is no room for ghosts" may not represent the scientific view of the world today: it represents merely the foreclosure upon facts which much of the science of the nineteenth century endeavored to effect; but it illustrates well enough the tendency of most scientific theorizing, namely, to build up an idea which will embrace all things generally, and have no room for errant and indefinable and seemingly lawless phenomena.

Nevertheless, life and conduct, and even the physical universe, are strictly incomprehensible in the last analysis and cannot be brought under such an all-inclusive and all-explaining concept. Nature fights shy of the closed system of the scientist, as once the bison fled the encircling attack of the hunters, as the hare runs from the round-up of the hounds. For this reason, historical religion, with its unfathomed mysteries, is really closer to nature and to reality than the scientific system which is closed only by shutting out certain facts which the consciousness of man insists are directly perceivable.

The only strictly closed system of thought,[2] the only explanation of the universe firmly enough fitted together and explicitly enough articulated to satisfy the demands of the purely scientific mind and keep out all disturbing elements—ghosts and gods and immortal souls and creatures possessed of freedom—is the system known as Materialism. This is the theory that all things whatsoever are explicable as various combinations of matter and energy.

We might point out the difficulty of this theory involved in the advance of scientific thought in recent years: matter itself is apparently only a form, or a series of forms, of energy; thus the system is deprived of its very name by the further development of research. But there is something else that we

wish to point out, which every one of us can recognize at once as an inexcusable defect. For all its compactness, and the satisfaction which it gives to one instinct of the human mind, how sadly deficient it is! The things which it leaves out of account are too real—or the account which it offers of them is too inadequate.

For instance, Freedom. From Leucippus and Democritus to Haeckel, men have labored to account for the universe in which we live by leaving out—or explaining away—the freedom of the human will. They have told us that the will is not free: that we are merely unconscious of the causes which determine our actions, our conduct; that if we were to become conscious of them, we should recognize ourselves to be as much the creatures of uncontrollable force—chemical affinities, or fate, or destiny, or desire—as the atoms or the moths. That is all very well. But we *know* that we are free, that some of our actions, at least, are not determined by anything or anyone but ourselves. If it were not so, life would be both meaningless and worthless. And how will the systematist account for this sense of freedom? Why do we think that we are free, and act as if we were free, if in fact we are not free? That is another riddle, quite as puzzling as the one which he has just solved with his neatly organized system.

But Materialism is falling into general discredit today. In its place, the philosophy which is gradually dominating all our thinking, whether academically as students we clearly recognize and after thorough criticism consciously adopt it, or as laymen absorb it through the ten-thousand secular channels by which it reaches us, is a philosophy based on Freedom. It may not be a closed and compacted system. Professor Bergson, who was its chief expounder, was openly charged with presenting fragments rather than a finished and ordered system. But so far as it goes, it is in closest touch with reality. The circle may be incomplete; its broken arcs may lie out in

the far distances, in isolation; but they are not joined up by any gratuitous hypotheses. And it is characteristic of men today that they do not feel that it would be better to draw them in and endeavor to construct a completed circle of considerably smaller dimension. It would be no circle at best, but only a crude jumble of disjointed geometrical figures! And incomplete though it is, yet because it is founded upon our own experience of freedom, it is closer to the point of view of practical religion than many 'systems' which have preceded it.

Religion, with its fundamental insistence upon freedom and personality, stands closer to reality than any closed 'scientific' system which ignores them. The mysteries of religion are the mysteries of freedom and personality. Man is free: he is responsible for his conduct; he is a moral being, and can plead no excuse of heredity or environment or overwhelming predisposition without surrendering his title to liberty as a moral being. And by the same token, God is free. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"—"Lawful" . . . "to do what I will:" what a strange logical paradox is involved in these words! Yet this simple ancient saying of the Gospel goes home to the very heart, to the feeling of justice, propriety, which is in us all. Nothing could be more lawful; and when it is the Lord of Creation who takes the place of the Master of the Vineyard in Christ's parable, the natural response is that God's freedom is the highest law. If there be a God, He must be free: a God who failed in that would not be God. And since it is He who makes law to be law, since in this sole case it is true that 'the King's word is law,' then His freedom is our law, makes our law. And so God is free and we are free, and there need be, ideally, no conflict between our freedom and His, no infringement of rights as between God and us, or God and the universe conceived apart from Him.

In this respect, religion and the philosophy of freedom are

agreed: at least, some persons might prefer to say, they do not disagree. For religion is not philosophy; its task is practical and not speculative. It can put up with most philosophies, just as the Church has managed throughout its history to get along with the most diverse forms of government and political organization. The facts of religion, the facts with which it deals and its own processes of dealing with them, and the logical implications thereof, supply certain data to be dealt with by philosophy. But it is no more the task of religion to supply a complete and satisfactory account of the universe in which we live than it is for philosophy to give directions for the overcoming of pride or gluttony, or for securing the forgiveness of sins. It is when religion is enticed away from the performance of its true task, and expends its attention and endeavor upon the working out of some system of metaphysics, that it ceases to be religion.

Hence it is not as a contribution to metaphysics, to speculative philosophy, that Christianity proclaims its faith in the divinity of Christ. It is true that this implies an 'open' rather than a 'closed' view of things in general. It requires, antecedently, a view of the universe in which personal freedom is a real factor. But it is not as philosophy that this faith is professed, nor as a chapter in the history of philosophical speculation that the doctrine of the Incarnation arose. Yet *the belief in the divinity of Christ is the strongest conceivable assertion of belief in the personality and the freedom of God*. Only a personal God could become incarnate as a human being: only a free and self-determining God could even imagine Himself so manifested to the world. This is the greatest of all protests against a narrow, closed system or view of the world: the strongest conceivable insistence upon an 'open' view, and a free God. Such a God is necessary for religion. He may or may not be this for philosophy, but He is this for religion. And He is the only kind of God whom

religious men today can conceive as God—whether He answers the philosophical demand for an 'Absolute' or not.

§ iv

But how can God be free, if He is limited by His own law —the law which He establishes for the universe? This question is often treated as purely metaphysical, and hence to be practically ignored by religious men and others, not specialists in philosophy. But we are convinced that it is not such, and cannot be thus ignored. It is bound up with the very idea of God; and the man who thinks of God at all, today, is compelled sooner or later to ask it. And we are further convinced that it is the more or less vague feeling that this idea is surrounded with such insoluble intellectual difficulties which keeps many persons not 'philosophers' from wholehearted acceptance of it; and that it is the refusal of many religious persons to consider the question which helps to preserve this illusion.

But the problem is properly one which belongs to Deism: it springs from the notion that God has established a universe of law, outside Himself, with which He can 'interfere' only by breaking into its system of law and nullifying one or more of its ordinances to suit His purposes. And if we get rid of the deistic notion, based as it is on outworn conceptions of the world in which we live, and substitute for it one more in accordance with modern views, the problem does not arise.

For if the law of the universe—physical and moral—is only the expression of God's freedom, and is not so much the product of His intellectual power, 'in wisdom framing all things' like an infinitely skilled architect, as it is the expression of His whole free nature, then it is still conceivable that He *might* abolish certain universal laws—but only by acting con-

trary to His own nature. He might do so: for He might, since He is free, act contrary to His own nature; but He does not do so. As a morally perfect Being He cannot (in the sense of *will* not) do what is contrary to His nature. If He were at any time to do so, the results for us would be far-reaching indeed. For the universe as we know it would cease to be; in place of the present world-order might appear another, but it would be one completely different from this.[3]

How then is our law the expression of God's freedom? Why is it not simpler to say that His law is our law?—Because law is something upon which we are dependent, and which is imposed upon us from without; we are more or less its creatures: while for Him it is but the manifestation of free choice. He has, so to speak, chosen His course; and as a perfectly moral Being He will hold to it. And while—or since—or because—He holds to it, our present universe founded upon law is safe. If God were to change—or 'change His course'—He might still be free (though the highest freedom is surely that of being true to His own nature); but we should be in chaos!

But then is God still free to work miracles, especially such a stupendous miracle as the Incarnation, without 'changing His course' and shivering the present universe to a chaos of atoms? The simplest answer, and the one which many thoughtful modern persons are finding, is that miracles do occur; only they are not miracles! The most searching criticism ought to be applied, of course, to all historical records of the miraculous, and to the reports of miraculous occurrences today. But when all is said and done, what is the miraculous but the *wonderful*? What is it but our word for such occurrences as pass our understanding, and cannot be at once rationalized and made a part of our knowledge of things in general? The modern mind is almost overwhelmed by the increase of the miraculous in our own times: only we

call it 'the growth of science,' and instead of staring wide-eyed at what would have struck the mind of anyone a few centuries ago as 'super-natural,' we set about at once, with no intervening delay of a century or two, as was once the habit of humanity, to rationalize these developments, incorporate them into our stock of knowledge, and make them a part of our view of things.

It is no cut-and-dried, mechanistic system which represents the universe as we conceive it today. It is rather a gradually unfolding, developing, changing world. It is not simply a progressive idea of the world which has taken hold of our minds and fires our imaginations, but we believe that the universe itself is progressive, one which is constantly expanding, achieving some purpose, 'getting somewhere.' Such a universe is the very first corollary of Infinite Freedom. And also—so at least religious men assume—it is the corollary of the infinite freedom of a perfect Personality, of a moral Being who is utterly good as well as utterly free.

Similarly, the Christian faith in the Incarnation—the manifestation as a human personality of the highest free and moral Personality—does not rest upon any antiquated assumption that God overrode the limitations prescribed in Creation, and forced His way into the world in their despite. For no such grounds exist any longer in the modern world. It does not posit: (1) the universe of law, (2) the determination of God to make Himself known, (3) the accepted record of the miracle of Christ's birth, the 'signs and wonders' of his ministry, and the triumphant miracle of the resurrection—and then proceed to argue that 'God was manifest in the flesh.' Rather, it starts from the indisputable fact that what we know of God has come through human personality, "His holy prophets which have been from the beginning of the world." Our knowledge of God, as an actual fact, is largely derivative and not direct. And in Christ we possess the greatest

possible unveiling of the Father. In place of the old dilemma, "Either Christ is God or he was not a good man," we believe that "either God is Christ—God is such as Christ revealed Him to be—or He is not God." That is, we can conceive no higher or more perfect revelation than that which Christ made, in his teaching, in his ministry, in his own personal life, in his whole attitude and activity. Instead of saying, "Christ was like God," or, "Christ was God" (though he was like what the best men had thought of God before the Incarnation, God thus confirming His earlier self-revelation, as the Scripture says)—instead of this, we virtually say, "God is like Christ," or, with the Apostle, "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." We do not desert the historical and run off into the metaphysical. We simply affirm that what we know of God is chiefly what we know of Him in Christ. And either Christ was God, or our knowledge of God is not knowledge, but ignorance and confusion. If God were demonstrably, or even conceivably, different from the God whom Christ has given us, we should resign at once the task of life: its burden would become intolerable.

This is the real ground, rather than the artificial and deductive theories of Greek or Latin schoolmen, upon which our faith in the Incarnation rests. How it could come about, what series of physical events were congruous to an Incarnation and what were not, we do not profess to know. We are prepared to assign an indefinite number of them—it may be one or two, or perhaps twenty, whatever the requirements of a true and sound historical criticism—to the action of the naive religious-artistic and poetic sense upon the early tradition of Christ's life and ministry. Nevertheless a certain residuum of 'miracle' is inevitable in the best scientific investigation of this chapter in human history. But our faith does not stand or fall with miracle, in the old sense. We are the rather inclined to welcome miracle in the past—for we are

taught to expect it in the present: the wonder of the world grows upon us rather than diminishes.

But the glorious implication of this fact of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, and the harmony in which it is found to have established itself with all our own and the race's highest anticipations and longings, with all the best that men have ever thought of God—the glorious implication of this on the side of God is His complete and unfettered freedom. In this we joy with unspeakable and undying gladness of heart. For if God's freedom is our law, truer still is it that God's freedom is our freedom as well.[4] Thanks be to God, who has made us for Himself, for some purpose not yet wholly clear, but assuredly for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him, and find freedom in fellowship with the Eternally Free! Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory: 'And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith'—for victory is possible only through faith!

The universe is not 'blind.' It is not the infinite mesh-work of delusion inwoven with delusion of which the Hindu dreams, and shudders in his sleep. It is no limitless prison-house of arbitrary law, which neither God Himself, the Fashioner thereof, can ever break into, nor we, its captives, break out of. It is not a closed system, petty in its narrow compactness, comprehensible enough, but therefore stale and trite and monotonous. It is no universe the making of which its Creator can only rue and repent, like a sculptor grieving over his imperfect work, tempted to destroy such mockery of the ideal; or like the deity in the old Semitic myth: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis vi. 6). But it is a fellowship of free spirits, with God Himself at their head, working out together the 'scheme of things entire,' from the imperfect progressing toward the perfect, gradually "fashioning it nearer to the heart's desire," and creating it 'good.'

If for us the performance of the task of life requires freedom, how much the more does our Head require it!

We can rejoice that He is free, with all the spirit and enthusiasm of a clan of borderers rallying under their chief, only rallying for independence and not for plunder, for the establishment of a just and stable commonwealth, a universal state of free souls, free for righteousness and moral ends. And it is such a God whose Son—our Prince, 'the brave and leal and free'—we joyously hail 'the Man of Galilee.'

§ v

But is there nothing then that is determined beforehand? How does it come to pass that we describe God as 'free,' as if He might conceivably not be free, but bound by His own or some other law? God is free: but free from what? Freedom is meaningless unless there is something like determination, something fixed, in contrast with which 'freedom' has a meaning.

Of course, no one can deny this. But is the order of things which we describe as 'determined' and 'fixed' one which exists outside and apart from God? It is difficult indeed to think of an order of things existing outside God, to which He finds it necessary to accommodate Himself, whether or not we think of Him as the Author thereof. We can think in such terms only by considerably limiting our idea of God: He almost ceases to be 'God' any longer. The only way in which we can preserve intact our idea of God and still hold to an order of nature which He has created, but which is fixed in its law and determined (or, as we more often say, pre-determined) in its action, is to suppose that this system exists, so to speak, in the mind of God—not perfectly, but gradually approaching perfection—and that whatever fixity and 'pre'-determination there exists in it is due solely to *God's*

*consistency with Himself*. If He should ever act in a way contrary to His own nature, i.e. in any other way than that which is right and true and good, then confusion and chaos would take the place of order. There would not simply be a new kind of determinism brought into the world; but determinism itself, as we know it—the system of law and order all knit together and universally effective—would disappear.

Determinism, then, the foil by which liberty is originally distinguished, the system of sequences in which effect succeeds cause forever, and by which even wayward human action is fairly calculable—this determinism does not and cannot exist outside of and apart from God. How then does it exist? It exists as the harmonious and balanced condition in which the ordered liberty of God Himself, His consistency with His own nature, is found. If God were to act in some way contrary to Himself—we cannot say it too often—then everything in the universe would fade, crumble, fall to dust and disappear. There is nothing solid in nature. A variation of only a few degrees in solar heat, the slightest increase or decrease in the density of ether, or the momentary failure of the force of gravitation, would not simply burn up or freeze to death certain forms of life on this globe, would not simply let a few stars and planets go crashing into farther space, but the whole wide universe would begin to slow down, like the merry-go-round when its drive-gear breaks; and all its forms of life would begin to vanish like the forests of frost on the window-pane as the room within grows warmer. It is no world of stone walls in which we live, which may be battered by storms and assaulted by foes indefinitely before it finally crumbles. It is as delicate as the flower of iris. Its existence depends upon the favoring conditions being just right; its further continuance is dependent upon the constancy of these conditions. Cosmos is no substantive word, it is qualitative; it means order, harmony, perfect adjustment,

anything but the cluttered interior of some vast pottery shop. As the Platonists said, the true cosmos exists in the mind of God, and the outer world is only its distorted shadow; we should say that both exist 'in the mind of God,' that one is the ideal, the other its realization now in process and only—thus far—partially achieved.

Are we then to say that God is free—as the first postulate of a thinking religion—in the sense that He is free to do anything *save* what is contrary to Himself, to His own nature? What nonsense! He is free even to contradict Himself, just as we too are free to do the very same thing. But He does not do it. And because He does not do it, therefore we, His universe, all things seen and unseen, physical powers, forms of life, spiritual existences, are now coming into being. The process is even now taking place, at the present time, and all things are new, freshly created every hour. And the determinism by which we are being produced, which folds us in its arms from our earliest moments, which conditions every action we perform, every thought and feeling we possess, is simply the order and law of God's own self-chosen consistency with the Right, the True, the Good, i.e. with Himself. It is His self-consistency which makes our order; and His freedom is our law.

Thus the only determinism that is left is the conditioning of freedom by the demands for order. And, after all, determinism is only a human conception, derived from our experience of material and 'finite' things. The Highest Freedom is self-ordered, and there is no determinism outside God. And as we share in His freedom, we come the more to realize *order without determinism*; or rather, determinism—the ordered system of causation—approximates more and more to freedom, to the currents set moving by the activity of free choice. This is a freedom which is self-determined. In the moral sphere, this is that "freedom from the law" which yet

fulfils and more than fulfils the demands of the law, of which St. Paul speaks. For it is conscious, and it seeks the ends which law is designed to secure.

It is freedom which is the first mark of personality. Intelligence and will, but chiefly will, make up the individual man. And will can hardly be called will unless it is free. Therefore it is again inevitable that God possesses personality, that He is a personal Being; and therefore religion is possible—for the primary thing in religion is the consciousness of God, who must, as we said at the outset, be a Person, i.e. a Free Moral Being. Therefore, also, growth and change are possible, for me, for society, for the whole universe. And therefore, moreover, my life may be worth uniting to the Life of the whole—for I may so unite it, and it will still be free, for God is free. There is no danger of mystic absorption, and the loss of myself in God, so that I shall cease to exert any energy for the good of the whole, and God alone does it, thus not needing me: for the union which is here possible is the fellowship of free spirits, He the Great, I the tiny. And so also, instead of uniting myself with Him for the sake of my own private gain, i.e. even my own salvation, I do so for His sake, who is Righteousness, Goodness, Love, Holiness and Virtue: I do so for the highest conceivable end. And therefore, finally, religion, which dies if it is self-centred, and lives only by self-giving, like the candle which provides light only by burning up, is not only possible, but is the most ethical bond by which society can be held together. Devotion to a personal God who is still active in the universe, dissatisfied with its present state, and toiling incessantly toward its betterment and perfection; a God who appeals to free men to volunteer in the task along with Him—such a God is the very hope of the world, of world-freedom and world-peace; for He only can band together the discordant, recall the disaffected, unite and encourage the disheartened,

and inspire the indolent and selfish to cast off their laziness and self-seeking and plunge with all their might into the task.

God is free: and He is working out the salvation of the universe, like an engineer laboring over an imperfect mechanism, gradually removing its unnecessary parts, correcting its errors, lessening its frictions, and equalizing its strains. To this day, it is more or less an experiment. It may not, finally, run. There is danger of wreck. The ideal lies on beyond the pitfalls. And perfect freedom is by no means yet attained—freedom, that is, of movement wherein order shall yet be a determining factor in existence. God is free: and yet He is hindered by the evil in the world. What happened to Christ is the crowning instance of this hindrance and check placed upon God and upon His free action by the forces of evil and disorder.[5] We do not know where this disorder came from, how evil got into the world. It seems to be inseparable from experiment, even such an experiment as a universe: but just why, we are not able to say. Nevertheless, God is gradually and irresistibly conquering the evil, both in nature and in human nature. And it is God's freedom which is the hope of a better world, a better humanity, a regenerated society, and a universe from which every last vestige and trace of evil shall be forever effaced. Then God shall be truly "all in all": a Free God supreme in a free universe, when final freedom is attained by all moral beings, and submission becomes voluntary and self-effected.

There are doubtless persons to whom the subject of this chapter will appear quite abstruse and metaphysical; for them, it goes without saying that God is personal, and even 'free' —whatever people mean who use such unnecessary language! —and nothing could be more ridiculous than to discuss the hair-splitting question whether or not it is so. But sooner or later most of us are compelled to work out our idea of God. And it is simply unreasonable to refuse to consider the idea

implicit in Christianity, as if the classical theologies of the past had exhausted its significance, and the identification of Jesus' Father-God with the Absolute of Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy rendered a permanently adequate account of the revolutionary God-consciousness of early Christianity.[6] It is no philosophical Absolute men are seeking for in religion; and so complacently do many of our religious guides today hand this over whenever men try to get a clear idea of God, that many men simply abandon their minds to practical agnosticism. The outward and visible signs of such desolation in the inner life may be somewhat slow in making their appearance, but they are nevertheless inevitable. We shall reap in time a moral harvest from our harmless-looking philosophical seed. It is in their minds as well as in their hearts that we must bid men get right with God.

"When we speak of God, we mean something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in solution. We mean a God whom men can love, to whom men can pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, howsoever conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created." [7] The pagan with his sacrifice upon the smoking altar, the sun-worshipper upon his knees adoring the glory of the dawn, are nearer to reality, are in closer touch with God, than the most philosophical person with a cold 'Absolute' in place of a loving Father. Better a limited God, better a God who suffers with his people, fights for them, shares their sorrows and their joys, their interests and their ambitions, one near enough to know the common life and understand how things go, whether well or ill, in this particular part of infinity, than a God so great and illimitable that His chief function is to spin off suns and galaxies which stagger the imaginations of all lesser beings.

Better a God who has no dealings with Assyria, better a God heartily interested in the welfare of one people, better a God whose glory is manifest in the exaltation of one particular city, his own beloved Jerusalem, than a God indifferent to the whole universe! We may conceive God so great as to be grotesque. Men fall into mishap, all too often, by starting out with some theoretical idea of a Ruler of the Universe, and then proceeding to lose Him as their idea of the universe widens. If it were necessary, it would be better to start with no such idea of God at all, but conceive Him simply as a great—no matter, just now, *how* great—Being above us; and then stick firmly to experience. We know Him first as the Father of spirits, loving and good; we find Him on the side of virtue and self-sacrifice; we find Him opposed to selfishness and pride and the indulgence of the flesh. His will is not yet done—of this we are fully aware!—nor His Kingdom yet perfectly established in the world. But we may come both to know Him—He is that near to us—and to identify our task with His, our life with His, our hope with His, our wills with His. The difficulties of the imagination then no longer stand in the way of our coming into relation with God: it matters no more to me that He is 'infinite' than it does to Him, for I know Him now as the Supreme Ally and Friend, in whom I am utterly confident, and whose resources, skill and purpose are unfailing. My God has emerged from the shadows. I know and trust Him as a real Person. And He is just as real, and just as personal, for all the unimaginable vastness of the universe and its inconceivable energy, as Jesus Christ represents Him to be—both in his teaching, the Gospel, and in his personal life, the Incarnation.

## CHAPTER VI

# *Prayer and Communion*

IT IS IN THE PRACTICE of prayer that the experimental nature of personal religion is both taken for granted and most thoroughly demonstrated. A man may settle his faith upon the solidest attainable basis of reason, like a towering pier anchored firmly in bed-rock. He may find every argument pointing in the direction of a free and personal God, and may be assured to his complete satisfaction that he himself is a free moral agent. Everything in life may point, for him, to the reality of what, speaking generally, we call the spiritual. But after all, it is only a matter of high probability. We can never be sure, apart from faith, that what is reasonable and likely must necessarily be true. Thinking a thing does not make it a fact outside us: for we cannot control the possibility of error in our logic, and we find, in this world, too much contradiction of the reasonable. To assume that what is reasonable and likely is necessarily reasonable and true is itself an act of faith—of faith in reason, or in ourselves, or in the reality and rationality of existence. But there is a still 'more excellent way.'

Unless a man has pushed on beyond this region of probability, unless he has acted upon what is probable and discovered for himself the corresponding reality, he cannot be said to be a religious man. Nor can he even be called a reasonable man, in the highest and best sense. It is not the elaboration of a satisfactory theory of life, nor an explanation of the great facts which meet us in this world at every turn,

which constitutes the achievement of religion. That labor is more properly the task of philosophy—though a working theory of some sort is required by every thinking person, whether he be religious or not. What constitutes religion is rather the active putting in force and carrying-out of the theory, through what we call faith. It means the taking for granted of what the reason assures us to be probable, and the setting forth upon *the quest of realization.* And if we trust reason at all, this is the most thoroughly reasonable thing we can do.

The great psychologist who devoted his later years to the investigation of psychical phenomena, and then arranged before his death to 'report back' to his friends any further findings on the other side and, if possible, to establish communication with them, not only did the most reasonable thing he could do; he acted in sublime though perhaps unconscious faith. Far from faith and reason contradicting each other, they may be—as in this case—united and identified.

§ 1

It is unfortunate that prayer is so generally looked upon, even by religious people, as a means of securing the satisfaction of our private wants and desires. But the highest definitions of prayer, offered us by those best able from personal knowledge and practice to tell us what it is, lay only the slightest emphasis, or none at all, upon the satisfaction of private needs. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." This is not Oriental fatalism, for the same Teacher bade his disciples pray 'nothing doubting that ye shall receive whatsoever things ye ask for.' "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knock-

eth it shall be opened." "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." In certain situations, in extreme need, God may be approached, and ought to be approached, with the request for material aid and support. This is undeniably within the meaning of prayer, and is covered by the intention of Jesus. And there are innumerable recorded instances of answers to such prayer. But to limit the activity of prayer, in practice if not in theory, to this, to use it solely as a guard against misfortune or poverty or sickness or accident or death, is hardly distinguishable from magic: in fact, prayer becomes then only a higher magic which has dispensed with its paraphernalia of amulets and potions, charms and secret formulas.

The central and essential fact in prayer is that it is the activity by which man comes in touch with God and enters into communion with Him. It may not be the sole activity by which this end is achieved, but it is the highest of all such activities, and the most direct. I may become conscious of God and enter into communion with Him while out in the fields or reading a book or talking with a friend, as well as upon my knees. But it is not so, ordinarily. And if I purposely set about to reach Him and communicate with Him, I will not adopt such casual and adventitious methods: I will, rather, simply pray. Experience itself teaches that God may be 'reached' most directly in this manner.

Prayer, then, may be first of all defined as the activity by which we set out upon the quest of realization, the venture of personal faith which we make in the hope of finding God, who is 'not far from every one of us,' and who, reason assures us, is the great Probability. It is no abstraction we hope to realize; it is not some vision we shall endeavor to make palpable by tireless concentration. It is not even for the betterment of our own souls that we seek Him. It is certainly not a secret formula of control which by experiment we hope

to discover and master, whereby to banish the ills of life from our own hard private lot—pain and misfortune and death. And it is not even elevation of spirit above the cares and anxieties, the vexations and discords forced upon us by circumstance which we are after. It is not houses and lands, talents and opportunities, fortune and happiness which we seek to obtain without toil, through interesting the divine philanthropy in our behalf. But it is God Himself whom we desire: God, the Eternally Free, in a world of ordered succession and unchanging sequence; God, the Righteous, in a world whose ordered harmony is invaded by evil and sin; God, the Only Wise, in a world where folly seems inevitable —and we ourselves have our full share in it; God, who is Love, in a world where hatred and oppression destroy half the beauty of life, and the rewards of success are bestowed apparently without regard for the ruin wrought by the exploiter and the plunderer. We cry out for God, of whose existence reason and intuition alike assure us, and it is Himself alone that we require, first of all, to give us confidence. If He is unknowable, or if He so supremely transcends our little world that it floats like a mote of dust in the sunlight falling at His feet, then we are—practically—lost.

We *must* have, speaking in practical terms, a God who is vastly nearer to us than that. He must be one who is interested in the affairs of this particular universe. He must have something at stake in its success or failure. He must be near enough at hand to be able to seize the right turn when it comes, and lead on to achievement. He must be free to interpose, to save from threatened destruction, to follow up His original miracle of Creation with continual acts of preservation and sustentation. His creative energies must not be exhausted; as the world works out phase after phase of the process, He must know what the next step is, and be able

to bring it about. He must be at liberty to release fresh energies, to supply continually mounting powers, to the work of Creation, which—far from being completed millenniums ago —He undertook only yesterday, and is still in the initial stages of accomplishing. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared"—but He knows and must know both what they are and how to achieve them. He must be more than the Engineer of the cosmos. He must be its Inventor and Perfecter. He must be able to discard outworn machinery and devise more perfect as things go on and the need arises or the opportunity comes. Above all, He must possess boundless foresight. In the days of Neanderthal man, He must have been able to see—not actually, but in idea—the European-American of today. In the present time, He must be able to foresee, and know how to bring about, a type of man at least as superior to us as we are superior to *homo primordius*. He must be able to foresee, from the midst of the surrounding moral chaos left by a brutal world-war, a civilization, a human society, in which savagery will be unknown, and the instincts of aggression and lust and brutality as dead in man as the appetite for human flesh.

Such a God is demanded—we still speak in practical terms —both by the biological view of the world which our generation absorbs in all its reading, study and reflection, from the high school, the college, the newspaper, the magazine and popular book, and likewise by the moral sense which has been so terrifically roused of late. It is this God whom the modern man will seek—and must seek—in prayer, if he prays at all. And the Christian may with perfect confidence urge this man to pray on his own terms. The Christian God is not really the absolute and unidentified Supreme Being of ancient speculation: He is a God who knows when sparrows fall and

flowers fade. He is intimately concerned with everything that takes place. He loves mankind—He loves men and women and children, especially children. And He has something at stake in this world of ours: so much at stake that He sent His Son to assume our human nature; and when the most hideous death and the intensest physical suffering loomed up before him—before the noblest, purest, best Man the world had seen—God never flinched, never despaired, made not the slightest effort to rescue him from his required fate. Such is the God of the Christian religion—a most human God, we might say; but more than that, a God heroic and self-sacrificing and infinitely patient. These were His virtues, we might say, which were most strongly emphasized by the earliest Christian missionaries, and which we find most lovingly portrayed in the New Testament. He is as free as we can possibly conceive; He foresees the end from the beginning, and sets about to achieve it; and over against the limitless power displayed in physical creation there is set a vastness of moral strength which is equally overwhelming to the imagination. He is at liberty to interpose in the affairs of men, but He prefers to have them share His task and conquer the evil in the world along with Him. He might have redeemed mankind 'by a nod'; but He chose a more moral way, He chose to safeguard the freedom of His creatures, and once having so chosen, nothing could sway Him from His course, not suffering, not disappointment, not the bitterest anguish of soul.[1] And He is still free: for the Christ who died on the cross manifestly appeared and 'showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs,' making it plain that he could not be holden of death. It is not a weak and indulgent paternity which we see in the Christian idea of God, but infinite vigor, stern self-sacrifice, even modesty and humility, and love which is as unbounded as it is strong.

§ ii

It is God Himself who is the object of prayer, not our own needs, either material or spiritual. Hence prayer is sometimes called the life of the soul, or its 'breath,' or its 'vision,' or its 'lips,' by which its earliest nourishment is drawn in. What all these figures mean is that prayer is the activity by which man develops his consciousness of God and the spiritual life within him grows strong. Hence the practice of prayer is the criterion of a living faith. Perhaps it is possible to imagine a religion in which no place is assigned to prayer. It is barely conceivable that a man may be religious and not pray. But it is inevitable that such religion cannot be based upon belief in a personal God; and it is highly probable that in such a religion something is substituted for prayer, some sort of spiritual exercises, meditation, the study of sacred writings, abstraction from the affairs of daily life, the cultivation of a permanent mood of detachment from time and space and all their vain shadows—or even something crass and mechanical, like abstaining from certain foods. But normal religion requires prayer, as muscles require exercise and become flabby and atrophied when continually disused. And the reality of religion may be measured by the reality of prayer.

Very few persons are able to echo the confession of Cardinal Newman, that in boyhood he rested in the thought of "two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." [2] But he remarks that this thought, together with 'the mistrust of the reality of material phenomena' which accompanied it, lasted only through adolescence, and gradually faded away when he reached the age of twenty-one years. Such a thought is too high for earth, too heroic for flesh and blood—if not too egoistic; and it is extremely doubtful if Newman could ever have accomplished the enormous practical tasks which he performed, if this had

remained the substance of his faith. In spite of certain indications to the contrary, such a thought is not the mainspring of the Christian doctrine of prayer. The essence of prayer is communion with God, and God Himself is faith's true and highest object. But the consciousness of God does not exclude the consciousness of other beings; and once the act of communion has been made and communication is established, there are other and lesser ends which may legitimately be sought. But they are sought now in union with God. Life and its affairs are viewed henceforth as God views them, *sub specie aeternitatis.*

Herein is to be found the actual and practical value which many persons derive from prayer. They gain strength for daily living. Patience, equanimity, self-control, long-suffering, gentleness mark the life of the true man of prayer—as also heroism and determination and self-sacrifice for the highest good of others. He can be patient, not because it is a virtue, but because God is patient: "my times are in Thy hands." He is unruffled and restrained in manner, for he is relying upon God, and need not become excited over difficulties. He is hopeful, because He expects great things from God. He is courageous and determined, because his strength is God's. He makes nothing of himself and yields willingly his own prerogatives, waives his own rights, because he has caught some glimpse of the high purposes of God. Such a man shares the spirit of Christ, for he has identified his own will with the Will of the Eternal. Nothing is more characteristic of Christ, or appeals more strongly to our deepest religious instincts, than his prayer, "Not my will but Thine be done." And this prayer was not occasional with him, drawn from his lips as he faced the great crises: it was habitual, it indicates the atmosphere of his whole inner life. We all recognize in it the very spirit of our Master. It was no weak fatalism, bowing before the inscrutable and inevitable, or shifting

responsibility for disaster and defeat; it was not resignation to 'what must be': it was the positive, glad identification of his own will and purpose with the will and purpose of God.

It is God Himself who is the real object of prayer; and not God as a means of securing our other ends. But once God Himself is reached, and communion with Him is realized, the lesser purposes of life are secured—in the measure that He wills them. It is the fulfillment of the promise: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

§ iii

Why then ought men to pray?—if God knows all about us, our needs and our purposes?—and if His will is bound to be accomplished anyway, whether we desire it or not, whether we know it or not?

But why is it assumed that 'His will is bound to be accomplished anyway, whether we desire it or know it or not'? That is just what we ought not to assume, and what we have no reason for assuming. God's will is at least 'morally certain' to be accomplished: He would not be God if His will could be permanently thwarted, and if He were not bound in the *end* to achieve what He sets about. But there are things enough in the world today to prove that His will is, at least temporarily, thwarted. And chief among the forces which make havoc of the realization of His purposes are the wills and desires of human beings. If only these could be brought into agreement with His will and purpose, all would be well, with us and with the whole world. "But we do not yet see all things brought into subjection unto Him." Prayer then is at least one way in which the will is brought into union and agreement with His will, and so the highest purposes—namely, God's purposes—come nearer to achievement.

And there is still another counter-objection to the difficulty raised: for there is more than one way by which most things may be accomplished. It is a quite mechanical and fatalistic notion that God has only one way in which He can accomplish His will and achieve His ends. As if God were less skilled than some human statesman or business manager or mechanic or player of chess! There are no doubt innumerable ways open to Him. The variety in life does not confuse Him as it confuses us. His resources are unbounded. The variety in life makes possible variety in the solution of its problems, and really does no more than supply the conditions under which the solution is to be achieved. The fact that I desire and pray for the health or preservation of my child does not mean that I set about to discover the will of God on the subject. I do not assume that He may perhaps will his recovery or that He may will his death, regardless of my wishes; or that He has in fact *already* willed recovery or death, and my prayer is only ascertaining the predestined issue. Such prayer would be unnecessary. I might as well wait and see what occurs. Furthermore, such 'prayer' would not be prayer. It is not for the purpose of reconciling myself to the inevitable that I fall upon my knees and implore God to spare my child's life! Rather, I take it for granted that God wills his safety or recovery as much as I do; and that God can use him in any number of different services, in His forces here or among the armies of heaven. And if he is spared to me and to this present world for a longer time than he might otherwise be, it means that God willingly takes the trouble to alter His plans to that extent. He will get His work done in some other way: and He can easily do it, for His resources are unlimited. Do I then impose my will upon God? Not at all. There is no doubt a compensation somewhere: and so men make no mistake in vowing to dedicate their lives to God if spared from disaster or death. But it is not for a com-

pensation that God hears and answers my plea. He does it—because He is free, and because He loves.

But what if my plea is refused?—It is not because the blind mechanism of the universe cannot be checked, even to release a child caught in its gears and wheels. It is because 'my Lord hath need of him' in some other sphere of life and activity. It is because, perchance, God in His wisdom and love, foreseeing a worse situation ahead, spared him by taking him to Himself. I could not wish him here, blind, maimed, in constant agony, mentally crippled, or smitten with some sore disease. I could not wish him thrust into torment for my sake. God in His wisdom and love has spared him—and me—by removing him from one scene of action to another, and attaching him to some higher command. And what may be true in one particular case may be true of any number: the wise general extricates his troops from an untenable position, even at the cost of much hard-won ground, even against the protests of the troops themselves.

Such are the simple thoughts by which men who pray explain for themselves the process by which prayer is possible, and by which God is enabled to answer prayer without disturbing and disrupting any great mechanism of cause and effect set going somehow outside Him. It is the freedom of God, and the freedom or plasticity of the universe, it is the divine resourcefulness, which is implied in every simplest prayer men make. The most sceptical person in the world cannot refuse to give fair consideration to such thoughts. For they deal with the elemental foundations of our human life.

## § iv

Much of the difficulty of prayer is to be found not in the ideas of God which it implies to many minds, but in the language which we use. It is not simply that the dignity and

propriety of prayer seems to be bound up with an archaic form of language, making use of 'thee' and 'thou' and 'thy' and a stately, or even courtly, manner of address unfamiliar to the common man today. One could almost wish that, for all their dignity, the ecclesiastical phrases might be abandoned, and the language of daily life adopted as the language of communion with God. There is nothing to hinder a man in private from saying 'you' and 'your' and using the speech of every day. But in public worship, from the dawn of history, men have prayed in archaic terms. It was so in the temples of ancient Babylon; it is so in the Church today!

But the greater difficulty is that our traditional language of prayer is shot through with the monarchical and predestinarian idea of God, and the mechanistic idea of the world. We thank God for institutions which He has 'ordained'; for laws which he has 'given' and 'established.' And we pray for triumphs which shall in some degree abolish the assumed sovereignty of nature, reverse its processes, and demolish its opposition; though we are rather hesitant about such prayers: they are too much like beseeching a stern and headstrong monarch to be clement, or they are too much like praying for good weather (which many wise people assume to be ridiculous). The ordinary man agrees that the request cannot be granted, and that we are prudent not to embarrass either God or ourselves with such requests. We forget that God is a free Person; and that the Creation, instead of taking place five thousand-odd years ago, or at some other vastly remoter date, is still in process; we ourselves are in the foremost files of time, among the first-born of the race. And God's creative toil is by no means over.

Far from exhausting His resources in making the world, and requiring now some millenniums of rest, He has only begun with His task! [3] The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel expresses it exactly in the words: "My Father worketh hitherto,

and I work." We cannot remind ourselves too frequently of the implications involved in such a text. Bacon's famous maxim, which afforded such inspiration to Thomas Arnold, that "In this world, God only and the angels may be spectators," represents a totally different standpoint: that of the theology of our fathers, moulded by a classical and old-fashioned philosophy, quite foreign to our days. So too the dictum of Carlyle: "Work, work, you have all eternity to rest in!" [4] We do not think of eternity as an endless rest, nor of God as idle. The one would be a deadly bore to us; and we are sufficiently like God to be sure that endless idleness would destroy His soul. We would the rather say there ought to be no spectators at all in this world, no mere idlers; this is no place for gentlemen of leisure! Work, work, with enthusiasm, with diligence: and be rejoiced to know that you have all eternity in which to realize all those plans which outrun the span of life here. Do not despair of the task for earth too high; let no discouragement overcome you when you see, beyond the goal of one attainment, other and higher goals rising endlessly, alluringly, calling you to greater effort still! For be assured, life is work, and the highest satisfactions are to be found in work; and if you can learn something from the example of the Supreme Worker, cherish it with all your heart. For He is the God of the present, and of the future; the world is just beginning to recognize Him, as it learns the worth of human toil, and learns to scorn idleness as cordially as it scorns gluttony and soft living.

And as we think of God as the Great Worker, rejoicing over His task, rising refreshed to ever-new toil, free and resourceful, still working at a creation which is by no means yet finished and perfect, so our prayers must be framed in more sincere and unaffected language. It is not reasonable to suppose that all the prayers of one age will be sufficient for the needs of the next. There are great standard expres-

sions of the spirit, like the Prayer of our Lord, and St. Augustine's prayers, and those of other saints—and sinners—such as are gathered into the collections so popular today. But these, while representing permanent enough attitudes and aspirations of the soul, must be supplemented with our own petitions and thanksgivings. And if the language of the Fathers or of the mediaeval saints does not suit our aspiration, by all means let us decline to use it, and not try to force upon ourselves moods which are impossible for us. Reality, earnestness, sincerity are what we want most of all, in order to make progress in a spiritual life. The slightest carelessness or vagueness, the least touch of unreality and insincerity is just as damaging to the soul as a few seconds' inaccuracy in the ship's chronometer or the navigator's sextant. Extend indefinitely this tiny inaccuracy, and the magnitude of the error is appalling: it may bring you into overwhelming dangers, it may wreck you and destroy you. The old preacher was quite right who debated with himself whether to say, "Lord, grant that I may go to Bedford," or, "Lord, help me to go to Bedford." There is no merely imaginary chasm between the ideas presupposed in these two prayers. One approaches a Monarch, humbly petitioning His fiat: "Go." The other cries out, equally humbly, but with more assurance of the purpose of God, for help, for wisdom, for guidance in the way, for strength to get there. Many of our prayers which begin with "Grant" ought never to be uttered. But many which mean virtually, "Help, Lord, or we perish," are of the only kind God can answer. And in the calmer seasons of life, in the ordinary ways and days, true prayer is not 'the menace of privilege' applied to things spiritual as well as temporal, a medium for securing 'grants' of this and that: it is rather an unbroken communion of mind with Mind, of heart with Heart, whereby we continually take counsel with our Father.

§ v

But are there not wishes which it were impious to utter? Are there not some desires of the human heart which no language, new or old, may legitimately cover? For instance, may we pray for the departed?

The war has faced many of us with this question, more clearly and poignantly than ever. Before the war, it seemed easy enough to assume that everyone had his full opportunity in this life; he knew that death must overtake him some time, and he ought therefore to be prepared for it. It seemed enough to say that this life alone represented the period of probation for the soul. Once dead, nothing more could be done for a man. True, this was not the Catholic belief; but it was common enough in Protestantism and more or less generally outside the Catholic Church. But the war has changed all this. The war came on very suddenly, and for most of us without any warning. Our boys were at school or college, one month, or at work on the farm or in the office; the next, they were somewhere in an army camp or upon the high seas or in a school for flyers. A few letters came; they were well; they were having an interesting time; we were not to worry about them; perhaps they were eager to get to the front and see the show. A few letters: and then none at all, or a perfunctory message from the War Department. They have gone! Forever—they have vanished from our sight, from our embrace, from their homes and their friends and their sports. Was there any preparation for death in their case? None at all, in the accepted sense. They died as they lived, hilarious or tense, gay or serious, exuberant in spirit or calm and purposeful. Just as they were, they have rushed into the Unknown with the speed of their comet-like ships in the sky, with the pounding roar of the guns in their ears, with the shrieking of shells and the whining of all

the demons of destruction above and before and behind them.

Can nothing be done for them now, since their time of probation is over? Have they passed beyond the utmost reach of our intercessions?—How is anyone to know this? The probability is all the other way. For if they are living, and we cannot but believe that they are, they must still be free and subject to change, capable of betterment, of growth, of aspiration. Of course, if one believes in prayer at all he will scarcely be constrained by the objection that the departed are dead and gone, and hence cannot be helped by us, or—rather than by us—by God. There are no dead souls. It is a contradiction in terms: for it is of the nature of the soul to live. The word 'soul' meant once no more than 'life,' or the principle of life and vitality, as we see in the pages of the Old and New Testaments. And if there is no death in that world of true life which we call spiritual, then prayer for those who are still living, in that other world or condition, is neither impious nor irrational. The God in whom we believe and trust is not the primitive God of ancient Greeks and Hebrews, whose kingdom was limited to the affairs of this life, whom 'the dead praise not, neither all they that go down into Sheôl.' For those who believed in such a God, the grave led into a world outside His care and knowledge. He had no jurisdiction there. Hence, 'the living, the living, he shall praise Thee!' We cannot tell where they are, nor the conditions under which they live, nor what they see and learn and enjoy; but we believe that they are with God, drawn ever into His nearer Presence. "The living, the living, they shall praise Thee!"—this is so, in a new and truer sense: *they* are the living, they have 'entered into life' and into fulness of joy and peace and strength. They are with God. They have passed out of this region of shadows and distortions into the realm of the true and the substantial. For they

are with God, and they now see things as He sees them; they work with Him; they see clearly, where we are still blind or only 'see men as trees walking,' with our imperfect sight; they have no need to hesitate or to ponder, where we continually falter and question, for they have a light upon their problems which we have not yet come to know. They are with God, and they are safe.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

What we trust to be true in our own case we can certainly trust to be true in theirs.

Why then pray for them? Simply because prayer is no different now than it was before. What is prayer but finding God, attaching ourselves to Him, identifying our wills with His, resting our love for those dearest to us upon God's own great love for them, drawing closer to Him and drawing—there is no other word for it—drawing *them* closer to Him through our unceasing intercession? If that is not prayer, or if such prayer is out of place with respect to those who have gone before us into that great world beyond, then it is equally out of place with respect to those who are with us still, and there is no room for prayer at all at any time.

Can anyone measure distance as between two spiritual beings in terms of miles or yards? Or can it be stated in terms of days and hours, as the time required to bring home my brother from Europe or the South Pacific? If he is in the other room, he may be as far from my thoughts as if he were on the other side of the globe; or he may be on the other side of the world and yet as distinctly in my mind, as definitely a part of my consciousness, as if he stood beside me. There is no measure of distance for such presence or separation. It

is the same kind of distance, if the word can be used, as that between myself and God. There is no measure for it. I am either conscious of Him or I am not; and even when I am not conscious of Him, He does not cease to exist for me—He is, I might say, in my subconsciousness, or unconsciousness, or wherever I keep that part of me which is not under the focus of attention and consciousness at this moment. So my dead are not dead at all. They are not even departed, in one great valid sense. They are just as much 'here' as they were in the days when I saw them constantly: only, in these days I do not see them at all, for the eyes of flesh are not capable of seeing the invisible, nor our ears of hearing the inaudible. There are sights in nature, we are told, which our eyes can never see; there are sounds which we can never hear. Even with the finest instruments, men are able to catch such sights and sounds only occasionally. But I believe they exist. And I believe that the souls of our dear departed are as truly souls now as they ever were; that they live, and move, and have their being, just as truly as in the days gone by. This is of course a matter of faith: but I am sure that reason points the way, and that faith *acts* upon what is probability of reason. "By the help of my God I will leap over the wall."

§ vi

There is one more word we should add: It is on the need for persistence. This is the prevailing testimony of all men of prayer down the ages. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "Pray without ceasing" was the counsel of St. Paul. The old story of Jacob on Mount Peniel, wrestling with an angel all the night long, and vowing, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," has been taken both by Jews and Christians as the great parable of successful prayer. And this is understood in a way which does not con-

travene the commandment of the Lord: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." It is not monotonous litanies of supplication, piling up their countless petitions before the 'throne' of God, which finally move Him to compliance. But it is the sincere and ardent continuance in prayer, even when prayer seems unavailing and God beyond reach, that brings its reward.

Almost all spiritual writers have told us of their periods of 'dryness,' of bleakness and desolation and impotency. These come as tests or trials of the strength of the soul. They are to be expected. Oftenest they seem to come after the man has for some time been giving himself to a religious life, and with some success. They do not come at the outset, but after the first rush of enthusiasm has subsided. It is only by carrying on, by dogged and persevering effort, by patience and persistence that final success may be won. Our lines of communication are broken a dozen times; there is nothing to do but put them up again, for we cannot go on without them. It is tiresome and discouraging work, but it is necessary. If we would live a true and worth-while life, we must maintain, or continually strive to maintain, our line of communication with God. He is our Commanding General: we can succeed only by keeping in constant touch with Him. And the special advantage which comes from continuing our efforts to pray in spite of disinclination and the feeling that our efforts are useless is in the fact that we thus bring our whole nature, and not just a part of it, into contact with God. In our seasons of dryness and impotency, we are tempted to relax our prayers, and get along without God. What happens? This part of our nature, and our low and desultory moods, are not brought into line with the rest of our nature, are not toned up by the stimulus of communion with God; and we are on the way to the state of the 'divided self.' But if these

are brought into line, our whole nature is knit together and strengthened, and out of our weaker members comes a new and unexpected strength.

There are three simple rules which we must not ignore, if we mean to master the holy art of prayer. They are these: (1) Beware of everything artificial and unreal, whether in sentiment or language. (2) Persist, do not give up, whatever the difficulties and disinclination; keep at it; 'wait upon the Lord.' And above all, (3) seek God first, not our own private desires and needs, and God only as the means to their satisfaction!

## CHAPTER VII

# *Religion and Sin*

IT MIGHT APPEAR to be a phenomenon strange and unaccountable, to the wholly casual and indifferent observer, say the 'Man from Mars' of the novelist, that almost all the religions of mankind make some sort of reckoning with the fact of 'sin.' It might seem strange, because apparently unnecessary to the progress of the world. The world, he might naturally assume, would be far better off without it. He might not go so far as to share the opinion of Nietzsche, that mankind would be better off without a *sense* of sin: but he would doubtless marvel at the widespread recognition given it in the world's religions. And it might also seem to him a thing unaccountable, even though he were a well-informed and thoroughly qualified observer:—unless, indeed, it is to be derived from the ancient dread of breaking taboos. That is, the sense of sin is the sense of having broken certain taboos, and therefore the feeling of the need of some sort of atonement; just as the ancient Hebrew was required, and felt himself to be required, to make reparation in some sort after touching a corpse. But, it may be proper to inquire, where did the idea of such taboos as the sense of sin implies, come from? Whence did they derive, and how have they retained, their *moral* value?

The child who is told not to touch a vase on the table one day touches it (as the primitive man touched, now and then, certain tabooed articles). Nothing untoward occurs; the vase

does not vanish, or crash to the floor; the child himself does not suffer any injury; and no one was there to observe his disobedience. The taboo has been overstepped. The disobedience has taken place. But nothing dreadful—such as might have been anticipated—has happened. Why, nevertheless, does the child feel a sense of guilt, and confess the fault when his mother enters the room? This is no unusual incident in childhood; and the higher the moral nature of the child, the readier will be his confession, the stronger his sense of guilt.

Religion fosters this sensitiveness. It may seem more natural in childhood, but adults possess it also—unless they are thoroughly calloused by indifference or pride. It is something which follows the religious man throughout life. And when one undertakes its description, it is not the gross wickedness of the world at large which rises up before him: a secret inner voice bids him, instead, "Look in thine own heart and write."

It is true that some religions have been little more than devices for meeting and explaining, or removing, this sense of sin. There have been hamarto-centric as well as theocentric religions: centred in the consciousness of sin rather than in the consciousness of God. And there have been many good men whose powers were handicapped, whose real strength was effectively diminished, by a type of faith which never fully released them from the grasp of this overwhelming sense. But in general, it is religion which has freed men from sin. Christianity in particular is a religion which promises release both from sin and from the guilt of it—that is, both from the tendency or habit of sin, and from sinfulness. For we must distinguish between what we may call the fact of sin and what may be called the sense of it. Christianity does indeed free men from past sin; and from the guilt of past sin; but it only increases immensely the sensitiveness to sin, and brings a profounder realization of its meaning. And yet Christianity is not centred in the consciousness of sin, does

not find its whole meaning bound up in the mystery of guilt. It is centred in the consciousness of God and freedom. This sounds like paradox. But it is literally and historically true. In Christianity, the very deepening of the sense of guilt has been the first step toward release from its crushing misery, the prerequisite of a new and triumphant life of freedom from sin itself. Here is a psychological fact; and at the same time a psychological riddle!

§ i

The great question for practical religion is not, "What is sin?" or, "How did it come here?—How did men become conscious of it?" but rather, "How do we get rid of it?" Nevertheless, in order to answer this last and most important question, it is necessary to make clear just what sin is, of which we wish to be rid.

We may, as we said, look upon the consciousness of sin as fairly universal and characteristic of human nature, since almost all religions give it some recognition. The kind of recognition given this consciousness of sin is always determined by the religion which makes it. Thus a legalistic religion like ancient Judaism looks upon sin as disobedience: "Sin is the transgression of the Law." A mystical religion, on the other hand, looks upon sin as darkness and error. A redemptive religion treats sin as an evil power which has fastened itself upon its unfortunate victims. A rational religion, like Stoicism or later Platonism, views sin—though it hardly uses the word—as ignorance of the good, the true, and beautiful. A therapeutic religion treats sin as a sickness of the mortal soul, a disease which robust health should throw off and make impossible.

And in our modern cosmopolitan and eclectic religious world, wherein one may find fragments of many forgotten

faiths mingled with an endless variety of those still surviving and some which are wholly new, there is a wide range in the conceptions of sin. One may find systems, like Christian Science, which ignore sin as sin, and refer to it only in connection with the 'error of mortal mind': a phrase which, for 'Scientists,' covers bodily illness as well. Or one may discover crude theologies according to which life is continual sin, and only ceaseless mortification can afford the believer any slightest hope of salvation after death.

But we are not here concerned with the varieties of religious ideas or practices. Suffice it to state that practically all religions are concerned with this fact of sin.

What every man realizes, no matter how good or how bad a man he may be, is that there is a gulf between what he ought to be and what he really is. And he knows that he has set that gulf there himself. He feels within him capacities for a much higher life than he has heretofore lived. He knows only too well that he does not live up to his ideals. And even so he may be aware that his ideals themselves might be still higher: they slip away and vanish before him as the foothills lose their height even before we reach their summit, for we see beyond us the majestic altitude of the mountains. But what distresses him chiefly is the realization that the hiatus between ideal and performance, between what he now knows to be right and what he actually does, is his own and no one else's doing. He could conceivably do far better. And he has miserably failed, heretofore, to do so. Why he does not do it, is not quite clear. It hardly seems due to laziness, or indifference, or insufficient strength, or failure—at the time—to realize the wrongfulness of his particular acts of sin. He is not conscious of choosing voluntarily to commit sin, or to live by any standard lower than the best; it seems rather to be perversity of habit. His nature follows certain lines of least

resistance, his behavior swings into the old grooves; and in spite of his sense of freedom and his consciousness of the right of self-determination in moral matters, his freedom is now partly gone. Like some stupid monarch, he has without knowing it resigned a part of his own sovereignty. He has let habit get the better of him. He was meant for a free man: but here he is, half a slave, cramped and confined by one part of his nature which has seized the throne and now dominates the whole City of Mansoul.

This is the sense of sin as practically every man knows it. How it is to be explained, unless it represents what is actually true in fact, in his own experience, is hard to say. An atavistic fear of arbitrary taboos is no sufficient explanation of this consciousness. Why men should go on, continually falling below the level of what they know to be right and good, is the greatest problem in the world. Yet we all know that it is so.

But this is by no means a full account of the sense of sin. For there are in most men's lives conspicuous acts which, from whatever obscure motive they are performed, do positive violence to the good and true. In a moment of passion, of blindness, of stupidity, we outrage not only our own highest and best nature, but the highest and best that we know in all human nature. Murder is still committed—by some men almost as freely as if they were living twenty thousand years ago. Rape and adultery and arson and false-witness and theft and oppression and lying are still committed; and they are not merely crimes against society and individuals, and therefore punishable by law: they are sins. And by sins we mean acts which definitely cut off a man from his own highest and best nature, from the highest and best nature of all humanity, from the fellowship of grace, and from God. That is, by committing such acts, and even others which the law looks

upon as somewhat less grievous, he not only outrages his own better nature, and widens the already existing gulf between his ideal and his performance; but he outrages the better nature of other men. He has sinned not only against himself; he has sinned against a goodness which is outside himself, and stands in some degree for God, a goodness which for most men supplies the standards of conscience. He has added to the sum-total of wickedness in the world; he has cast his strength openly into the service of sin. Therefore reparation is necessary if he is ever to regain his lost place, in his own as well as the world's estimation. Some sort of atonement and reconciliation is absolutely required. For something has definitely been done, accomplished, effected, by his act; he no longer stands where he stood before; hence something must definitely be done and accomplished to restore him, if restoration is still possible.

The distinction which the old theology made between venial and mortal sin may seem abstruse and academic: it turns out to be only too true to fact. The mere daily faults, the passing sins, are hardly to be compared with the open and flagrant crimes which cry to heaven for vengeance. And yet they are sins, and the flagrant acts of violence are possible only because the habit of nature has been formed on a low level; the sins of thought make possible the sins of word and deed; and the sins of every day lead up to the terrific, soul-destroying sins of a lifetime.

But what constitutes the sinfulness of sin is not its enormity, its red-handedness and violence; what makes a sin something more than a crime is the fact that it affects our relation to God. This is why religion uniformly speaks of sin, not crime, as blocking the way to God. Sin is wrong conduct, evil or wickedness of thought, word or deed, in so far as this shuts off a man's communion with God. It might help to make this clear if we were to speak of an action as a 'fault' or 'failing' if

it harmfully affects only the man himself; as a 'crime' or 'wrong' if it affects seriously his neighbors, or society generally; as a 'sin' when it affects harmfully his relation to God. But the situation is more complex and interpenetrating. No man can injure society, his neighbors, or himself without at the same time injuring God. No man can harm himself or another without committing sin. For sin is more than the transgression of the law: it is an injury done to Goodness itself. Righteousness and Truth, which are in God, suffer when one man harms another, acts unjustly, deceitfully or selfishly. This is why the 'sense of sin' is a sense of guilt, as well as a recognition that one's conduct misses the mark of the ideal. It is more than a recognition of moral failure. It is such a feeling as we might have if we had slapped our mother in the face, or broken her heart with our misdoings. This the Prodigal felt: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son." This the boy feels who comes home after a riot of waywardness and finds his mother prostrate with grief and sorrow. The same sense of guilt is inevitable in the man genuinely conscious of sin.

That is what sin is. It is more than moral failure. It is more than an injury which we do ourselves, or than the casual faults which we find in ourselves—as a man might hold a mirror before his soul and be pained to discover its blemishes. Sin is something done not to ourselves but to others—above all and partly in consequence to God. It is a serious mistake to limit sins to 'faults,' little moral failures which hardly do more than make a person difficult or exasperating to live with. It is more serious when sins are limited to grievous and high-handed acts of violence and injustice to our fellows. For the essence of sin is neither the 'fault' nor the 'crime': it is the injury done to Goodness itself, to God. Men speak of atonement as vicarious, as the suffering of one for the sins of many; and such indeed atonement often has to be. But we do not

often think of *sin* as vicarious. Few persons today actually suppose that

> In Adam's fall
> We sinnèd all;

and yet nothing can be truer than that my sin usually drags someone else into the mire with me. I cannot sin alone any more than I can be saved alone. And my sin affects those nearest and dearest to me, almost as if they had shared its motive. They do not share its motive, and so they are still free from its guilt. But the atmosphere which I help to create, the reaction my action occasions, is something shared with others and, as it soon appears, something quite outside and beyond my ability to recall or to make good. I have cast my vote, outnumbered though it may be by the ballots of others, for the party of moral reaction, for crime and selfishness; and I cannot recall it. It is done, once and for all. My influence has gone forth; and the fruits of my sin I may see, possibly, twenty years from now. My secret sin—the sin which I thought was secret—has been observed all the time. And to a degree, it may be great or small, another soul has grown bitter and disillusioned, discouraged, sickened of life, disgusted with hypocrisy and futility, tired of men who 'say and do not.' That is why sin is so awful an offense and works so irreparable an injury. It hurts and stings and blinds. It injures us, like poison or an infection of disease; it harms others, and strengthens the opposition to goodness and truth which we find active in the world; and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

Sin is no 'useful evil,' by which we learn the value of good. It is something wholly bad. It is not darkness, the shadow of good, or the mere absence of light. It is not even a mere detour or side-tracking of the soul in its unceasing progress: it is a thoroughly bad and undesirable state. It is sickness of soul; persisted in, it becomes the death or atrophy of the

soul's higher capacities. And therefore there can be no trifling with sin—as well safely trifle with scarlet fever or 'TNT.' It is a downright evil, an abhorrent, abominable, stupid, stultifying thing, without which the universe were ten-thousand times better off. But this is not to say that mankind were better off without the *sense* of sin, or that the sense of sin is a hindrance to the moral and cultural education of the human race. So long as there is sin, so long will there be a sense of it. So long as the disease remains, the suffering will continue. And it is through the sense of sin that it becomes possible for men to face the evil and endeavor to throw it off.

§ ii

How then are we to get rid of sin? Shall it be by some wise and beneficent Power offering to men a reward for ridding themselves of it? Such may seem to have been the method proposed by legalistic religions: be good, do good, and enter into bliss. Satisfy the requirements of the divine law, and God will assure you of eternal happiness. But would we tell a sick man to get well for a reward? Seneca long ago pointed out the idleness of such an exhortation. Health itself is good; and if the man can only get well, he does not ask a reward. And it is not the motive to recovery which men lack: it is the power. Sin is not the same thing as transgression of the moral law; it is that, true enough, but it draws a larger circle, including the lesser within it. It is something personal. It affects God; and it affects us. And we are not like children who must be coaxed to take their medicine. We are aware that we are not well, and we would be well only we cannot throw off the disease. Or, to change the metaphor, it is because the religious or spiritual life is essentially freedom that we feel all the more keenly the shame and burden of the shackles of sin.

Jesus destroyed the system of merits and rewards which

stood in his time all too generally for religion. On the one hand, from the point of view of God, he did so in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. The laborers who had toiled through 'the burden and heat of the day' expected, at nightfall, a greater compensation than those should receive who had been engaged in the afternoon. But the Master of the vineyard, insisting upon an equality of wages, said to one of them, "Friend, I do you no wrong: did you not agree with me upon your wages? Take up that which is yours and go your way; it is my will to *give* unto this last, even as unto you." What Jesus meant is that there is no possible measure to be found, in our deservings, for the bounty and goodness of God. The reward itself, so far exceeding the 'shilling' of the story, is compensation enough, is more than compensation, for our efforts. Just so, health is so great a good that it can hardly be looked upon as a reward for the efforts necessary to acquire it.

And from the other point of view, that of men conquering their sins and fulfilling the requirements of the Law, he broke down the religion of merit and reward by the simple process of applying it: "When you have done all, say, 'We are only unprofitable servants: we did no more than is our duty to do.' " There is no scale of values here comparable to that which obtains in the commercial and industrial world. Goodness is good enough in itself, without sugar-plums and inducements of various sorts thrown in. We know what we want; and if only we could once obtain that, we should not ask for additional bonuses and gratuities. — The heart of every man intensely in earnest echoes the truth of this principle laid down by Jesus.

But did he remove this inducement of external reward only to substitute a higher self-interest: Get rid of sin for the sake of your own salvation? This has passed too long for an adequate representation of the Christian Gospel; it is in reality only its caricature. It was excusable in ancient pagan critics of

Christianity to represent it as a religion of sublime self-interest, in which the believer endured privations, miseries, and went through other odd and—to pagan minds—indefensible performances in search of his own salvation. But at least we do not find this in the teaching of Jesus. We do not know that he set the ideal of sinlessness before his disciples, as the condition of entering the Kingdom of God. Rather, he took that for granted, and used his time in explaining and enforcing the demands of a higher righteousness than that of a vacuous 'sinlessness': it was a character positive and active for good which he set before them. We look in vain for such a recommendation as "Blessed are the sinless." Instead we find, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the humble and lowly, blessed are the pure in heart (which is something more than vacuity of soul), blessed are the peace-makers, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness." So likewise a theology which interprets Jesus' character in terms of mere sinlessness is quite negative and makes him inhuman. We do not say that he was sinful; but that it is not *enough* to say—of him least of all in the human race—"He was without sin."

Nor have we much confidence, either, in education as a means of ridding men of sin. It runs off too easily into the by-ways of mere intelligence and knowledge; it is too easily compatible with a non-moral way of looking at life. In our own times, we have seen that it may be compatible with the grossest deceptions and most hideous barbarities. Knowledge, scholarship, mechanical ingenuity were for four black years and more sworn into the service of sin. It may be that occasionally education achieves the spiritual end we have in view; but it has not yet been proved to work, in the vast majority of cases. The method must be simpler, the way must be more direct, if we are to follow it and be rid at once of sin and sinfulness, and ready to answer the high call to active and unselfish service which Christ's Gospel makes to men. The

worst fact about sin is that it stands in his way when a man really wants to do some noble and worthy deed; he is disqualified, incapacitated, like an athlete penalized for unfair play and sent out of the game just when it waxes hottest and he is ready to effect the manoeuvre which will win the victory! And in this case the penalty is not arbitrary, but automatic, like a physical injury or disease, fever in the blood, a torn ligament, a damaged eye.

§ iii

Let us examine then the method which Christianity proposes, which Christianity has applied successfully through the centuries. It has been proved to work, in countless cases; the probability is that it will still work, and that the modern man will find here the way he is seeking.

We have already remarked that the first step which Christianity takes in the way toward the riddance of sin from human life is the paradoxical one of deepening the consciousness of it. And yet it is not so paradoxical, save to the man who hates sin simply for the disturbance and unpleasantness which it creates in his life. The first step in being rid of a physical ailment is surely to recognize its existence: even the mental therapeutists who refuse to admit the 'existence' of disease accord it sufficient recognition to visit or engage the services of a healer! And by deepening the consciousness of sin is not meant giving it an undue or fictitious importance, thinking it worse than it really is, as if, in such a case, men might be frightened into recovery! But we must learn to abhor sin, we must become fully aware of it—for still it 'lieth at the door.' And if sin does in any degree cut men off from God, then there is little danger of overrating its importance.

"The way of holiness is the way of penitence; it is the very pathway of the saints." Such a maxim is not too high for the

ordinary man; for the same God, the same religion, the same sinfulness is ours and theirs. The only danger in becoming more deeply conscious of sin is that we shall fall into despair, and assume that we are ourselves (not the sin but the sinner) abhorrent to God. That way lies pessimism, and, if the man be weak-nerved, madness. But what makes us conscious of sin ought also to keep us from despair in the midst even of the intensest realization of its meaning: it is not our own loss, but the loss of God. It is not something which we may, unfortunately, not obtain, and the loss of which sorely grieves us; it is something that God has not attained. It is not we, but universal goodness, which suffers. I am thoroughly convinced of this: true sorrow for sin is no unhappy regret at something which we have lost, but something which we have lost *which belonged to someone else*, someone greater than ourselves. For the penalized athlete, it is the game which is endangered, the play, the victory of his side, more than his own personal pride; the loss of pride he accepts without complaint.

The second step in the pathway of penitence is confession. The bare psychological value of this has not yet been fully investigated; but we are confident that it is very great, both in the sense of the more or less public and open confession to others—or before others—and of secret confession to God alone. It is certainly true in the case of what we think of as the 'greater' sins, if not of venial ones. And when confession has to do with sins by which we have wronged others, when we confess our fault to the person wronged, there is no question of its psychological—and also its ethical—value. Honor demands it. Only the coward or the man insanely proud will refuse it. It is unfortunate that ecclesiastical confession has become so completely bound up with a mechanical system of required 'duties,' and so involved in the petty artifices and devices of spiritual 'directorship,' that it is now often identified in men's minds with a scheme for unloading personal respon-

sibility for even a good moral life. Protestantism needs to recognize that the reaction has gone too far, and that provision ought to be made for this normal requirement of the human heart. We do not mean necessarily or exclusively confession to clergymen; but we ought to emphasize, certainly we ought to recognize more fully, the need for confession of sin in the ordinary religious life.

With confession goes naturally restitution. The person injured must be compensated in so far as we are able to effect full restitution. This is a fundamental ethical requirement. Justice demands it. We scarcely require to elaborate this point. For if confession is real, if we are truly sorry for our sins, no other way lies open. We will ourselves desire to restore where we have defaulted, to recompense where we have robbed, to make good where we have done unjustly, in a word, to 'square ourselves' with the world and with our neighbors and, not least, with God.

Thus the process involves, on our part, two mighty swings of the pendulum: an intenser realization of the meaning and bearing of our sin, which might, if the movement were not reversed, lead on to pessimism and despair; and a return through the positive actions of confession and restitution. This supplies the condition, so to speak, on which the clock may be set going once more. But what makes our restoration possible, and enables the clock to keep going, is something outside and above us. As God was affected by our sin; that is, since we actually involved Him in it—for sin is personal, and affects our relation to Him; so He is involved in our restoration. Our further progress, the continued action of the clock, after it is started again, is dependent upon Him. If sin is an outrage upon goodness, then Goodness, or God, being personal, must effect our forgiveness. In a word, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That is the ancient and repeated Christian

testimony to a fact of experience. Men have confessed their sins, and have joyfully found that God forgives. And more than the forgiveness of past sins, there is given strength to overcome present sin: the guilt of sin and the fact of sin are alike abolished. How this is brought about lies deeply hid in the mystery of the relation of God to men which culminates in the Incarnation. But the *fact*, the psychological and experimentally demonstrable fact, that God both forgives and, through union with Himself in Christ, conveys power to overcome sin—'cleanses us from all unrighteousness'—is what we are here concerned with.

It is beyond the scope of our present discussion to examine the theological basis of this fact, or rather, the theological implications which have been discovered in it. It came first into the knowledge of men as a blessed experience of reconciliation and new power. It was, as a further matter of fact, of plain historical and biographical fact, connected with faith in Christ. Men knew him, believed in him, devoted their lives to his loving service: and found reconciliation with God in their knowledge and love of him. The theology came later. This was only natural. Men seized upon the fact, and found themselves compelled to bring it into relation with all other facts which, in their sphere of knowledge and experience, had to do with God. Much of the early theology on this point was due to St. Paul. It was he who worked out the implications of the fact. And the theology of the atonement which has always characterized Christian thinking is largely his work —though countless misunderstandings and misinterpretations of his theology have grown up and fallen into decay in the course of twenty centuries. It may be useful to consider briefly one significant point in his interpretation of this fact.

It is easy to accuse St. Paul of subjectivism in his theology of reconciliation: as if he argued out from the fact of the experience of personal salvation to the required presupposi-

tions of Christ's 'work' in the world. But the accusation is not really grounded. Like all the early Christians, he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, who had entered the world to accomplish something for God and men. This he accomplished, in his ministry, his teaching, his death. And then he ascended to heaven, to continue his work from the very throne of God, "thenceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool," as the Apostle quotes the quaint line from the ancient Psalm. His work was to save mankind from sin and death: the work was begun, was now being continued, and the future would see it completely effected. The salvation which Christ is effecting has already begun; but its consummation is still in the future, when comes "the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power [which are now in open rebellion against God and righteousness]. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." There are two supreme moments in this conquest; one, when the consummation shall come, and he shall give over the kingdom to his Father, that God may once more, sin destroyed, 'be all in all'; the other, equally necessary, when he, himself nailed to the cross, was in the act of nailing sin to the cross, triumphing over the powers of evil, destroying in his own flesh the sin of the world. Hence past and future are bound together in Paul's conception of the mighty 'working of Christ.'

Hence 'the theology of reconciliation,' as it has now come to be called—the salvation of the *individual* through reunion and reconciliation with God, after being alienated by sin, a reconciliation which is effected by Christ and in Christ—is not really the deepest and most vital theology in the New Testament nor in the thought of Paul. Let this not be misunderstood: it is vital, and profound; it is a genuine fact of

experience which lies behind it; but its significance and even its possibility are, in the religion of the New Testament, dependent upon something else, viz. the appearance of Christ in the world, the Messiah, the Son of God, to effect the (future) salvation of the world. That is, in the language of theology since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Atonement is effected through the Incarnation. The one includes or involves the other, as a major involves a minor. This was the positive and objective 'work of Christ,' the coming into the world and saving the world; and the process of reconciliation is merely the subjective act by which the individual returns to God, enters or reënters into communion with Him, and, so to speak, *appropriates to himself* the future salvation wrought by Christ. This subjective and individual act is therefore quite naturally of a secondary character.

It was naturally such a man as Paul, whose consciousness of sin was unsurpassed, who made this important contribution to the thought of the New Testament. It was natural, too, that such a man as Augustine, and for an even stronger reason, should lay intense and increasing stress upon this aspect of Christian experience. It was Augustine who gave to this doctrine the emphasis which to this day it possesses in western Christendom. The mission preacher, giving his testimony for Christ in the dark quarters of New York or London or Chicago, may not know it, but it was St. Augustine who gave him much of the language he so earnestly and effectively uses. And beside him stand Wesley and Luther and Bunyan and Knox and all the great Pauline 'evangelicals' of Christian history.

We ought, perhaps, to apologize for even this slight digression into the field of theology. But there are many men who fail to appreciate the matter-of-fact significance of the Christian experience of restoration and forgiveness, simply because it is bound up in their minds with crude and hazy notions

derived from popular misrepresentations of theology. They rightly abhor a doctrine which, as they assume, presupposes unmanly and hysterical moods of one sort and another, or which assumes on the part of God motives which would be intolerable in beings like themselves. Whereas, essentially, Christianity is the very opposite of hysteria and unreason; and its fundamental experiences are simple and sane. It is at the farthest remove from a religion self-centered and subjective; for the individual is saved by no process which takes place merely within himself, by the cultivation of certain mental states; but primarily and essentially out in the world, outside and away from himself. He is saved or reconciled or restored only by linking up his life with the great Fact outside: the individual is saved only because the race is being saved.

This, then, is the great characteristically Christian point of view: The world was meant to be perfect. It is not perfect, because sin has appeared in it. How it came, there is no telling: it was not fate, nor the devil (for the devil alone could not have done it); for that is only one remove from saying that God created it,

"And e'en with Paradise devised the Snake."

In its essence, sin is the exercise of free choice, in choosing the evil and rejecting the good. And God made men free, thereby risking the outcome. But He is not indifferent to the outcome. He is not even indifferent enough to banish sin by destroying the race once it had gone wrong—or, less anthropomorphically stated, allowing it to destroy itself. He is vitally concerned in the outcome. He will stop at no further hazard to redeem and restore. And in the final view, from the point of view of God who, even as men but infinitely more clearly, 'sees both behind and before,' sin is only temporary, incidental, episodic in the history of mankind. In the end, it is to be

rooted out, and suffering and death along with it. A free world, a universe of free, creative fellow spirits, though of a lower order—'the sons of God'—working with Him, is what we may call God's ideal for the race. Hence the work of Christ and the meaning of Christianity is salvation from sin, suffering and death. And in this sense, this sense only, sin has no 'reality': it is not a permanent and essential element in the universe; it is to be thrown-off and discarded, just as nature throws off and discards the evolutionary variations which lack 'survival-value'—only sin is not so harmless as the majority of these. Hence the conquest of sin is the work of God, even as it is the work of the man who has sinned. Therefore God makes every effort, affords every opportunity within His power (though it is not within His power, as a righteous moral being, to destroy sin by a single fiat, and reduce mankind to the state of virtuous automatons), for men to be saved from sin, and restored to communion with Himself. Herein rests our hope, and our highest incentive: it is God who forgives, it is God who saves from sin.

§ iv

But is there no such thing, then, as an unpardonable sin? It is remarkable how many poor souls have been obsessed with this idea; and whether or not its truth is admitted, the charge stands against Christianity, in many minds, of encouraging this obsession. It is taught plainly enough in the words of Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

The occasion of this saying is clearly indicated in the addition, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark

iii. 28-30). Torn from its context, the words might pass for an oracular pronouncement of doom upon certain undesignated individuals who could never be sure whether or not they were thus guilty, and who might brood indefinitely upon their state. There have been persons enough of this sort. But the words were not meant as a pronouncement of doom, nor even as a mere observation of fact: they were intended as a warning, addressed to the disciples, on the occasion when the Jerusalem scribes came down to Galilee to investigate his work, and pronounced it that of an impostor and demoniac. "He hath Beelzebul." "By the prince of demons he casts out the demons." This disappointing verdict came in the very hour when his old-time friends, hearing of his popularity with the multitudes, came to take him away; "for they said, He is beside himself!"

The sin of which he speaks was that of attributing God's work to the power of Satan, to diabolical motives and agencies. Instead of the gracious gospel of life, they heard only the deceptions and enticements of the arch-enemy of mankind. His teaching of the new righteousness and of the coming Kingdom of the loving Father they understood only as the device of the devil for upsetting the established religion of the country and leading the ignorant populace to ruin. There was no doubt some professional and class interest involved in their judgment. Jesus was a dangerous leader—dangerous to the established and traditional privileges of the professionally pious.

The sin which is unpardonable is the sin against light; and it is unpardonable for the simple reason that unrepentance is literally inevitable. The man who so sins cannot repent, for he cannot know that he has sinned. This ought to be enough to quiet the extravagant fears of the man conscious of sin, and in terror lest he has committed the unpardonable sin: for the unpardonable sin prevents altogether the consciousness of any sin. It is persistent insincerity which effectually closes

heaven against a man. For he trifles not with men, but with God and his own self. His state is practically hopeless. He must be saved from himself and in spite of himself, if saved at all. In ordinary language, this means that 'he' cannot be saved. If anything is saved, it must be something other than the man himself, as he is now. What this may be, what possibilities of regeneration there still are in his case, we cannot say; God alone knows.

Are there many who commit this sin? The question is much the same as that other: Are there many who commit 'mortal' sin?—for neither can be answered. If one may presume to guess, it would be to say, with most theologians, that there are exceedingly few who are thus guilty. But the question is not vital. It was not a datum for speculation which our Lord here laid down, but a solemn warning. Every man must be on his guard against such sin. For the issues of the spiritual world are as vital as life and death. A man may lose his life, or he may save it, here as in the physical world. We are surrounded by impenetrable mystery; but the path before our own feet is clear, and we have only to tread it confidently to be in safety.

§ v

All sin is selfishness, at root. It sets the individual advantage above the advantage of the world or of one's neighbors, the apparent private good above the universal good. It sets the immediate advantage ahead of the final prosperity, the momentary success above the high purposes of a lifetime. It is hard to define such selfishness, because it does not really prosper the true self: a man really robs and impoverishes himself when he is selfish and self-seeking. "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

The cure for sin, as for selfishness, is an unselfish devotion

to good. Simply fighting down sins as they appear is like clipping off the heads and leaves of weeds in the garden; what is needed is to hoe them up by the roots, and plant good seed in their place. And this we do when we fill our hearts with the love of God and the love of others, in and through and by Christ and the Spirit. This St. Paul did, "in Christ." "In Christ" was the great formula by which he solved the difficult problems of sin, the otherwise insoluble questions of conduct and of devotion. And many another, less gifted than St. Paul, less thoroughly furnished beforehand unto all good works, has

Lost his gods in deep, Christ-given rest

and filled his life with love and tenderness, with the self-conquering, self-subduing power of devotion to the Cross.

This is the secret of Christianity, the open secret, the mystery unveiled, hid from ages and generations but now revealed 'in Christ': that to conquer sin, and be rid of it forever, it is not enough to tug along manfully at one's own boot-straps. It may seem courageous and self-reliant enough to do so. But in the case of most of us, a new devotion, a new heart's-love, must take the place of the old. It is the psychological mystery of Christianity: that love conquers where common-sense and the wisest self-interest fail; that men are saved from sin—not only from guilt but also from sinning—by devotion to Jesus Christ; that in union with him, who died on the cross on account of the world's sin, who rose from the grave Victor over death and over sin which leads to death, men find new life and power enabling them to live lives similarly victorious over sin, conquering evil habit, and serving God in holiness and confidence. If there is one fact which stands out distinctive of Christianity, it is that it is a religion of salvation from sin, and that it actually does so save men. Not from an endless future hell of remorse and regret, merely;

but from the burden and futility of a life crushed by its sense of guilt and powerlessness, here and now.

It may seem weak and childish to confess one's sin. It may appear much the more manly course to refuse to admit it, and to 'stick it out' along our course, come good come ill. But when we know that ill will come, and already does come, it is mere folly and stiffneckedness not to change our way, admit our wrong, and try to get started right. It is really fear and cowardice, the most unmanly of all weaknesses, which move us to cover up our sin, refusing to acknowledge that we are in the wrong, and unwilling to take counsel as to the right. And our cowardice and fear, in this case, are founded upon pride. If selfishness is the root of all sin, pride is the source of all indifference to it. If sin is essentially an injury done to Goodness and Righteousness—that is, to God—it is pride which holds us back from acknowledging our fault and asking forgiveness of the injury: the same foolish, wicked pride which disrupts families and friendships, which bolts doors against sons and brothers, sisters and daughters, and chills the countenances of men who ought to be the very best of friends. Do we not all know something of it, by observation, at least, if not by experience? And shall we suffer this wicked pride of heart, this foolish sensitiveness over our private dignity and 'honor,' to stand in the way of our reconciliation with God, and fulness of life—power and vigor and wholeness of soul?

If some wicked spirit were to persuade all men that sin meant the offending of an easily angered and unforgiving deity; if he were able to convince men that not only had all sinned, but all were without hope of reconciliation; then men would cry out against the tyranny of such a God. "Away with the tyrant in heaven! We ourselves are better than that!" But now that all this is untrue, and God is seen to be the most loving, most completely forgiving Being men can imag-

ine, how do we respond to the fact? In the most perverse and unreasoning way! We are like a nation which hates tyranny, but does not care much for freedom either. We are held back by our pride from admitting our faults and confessing our sins. We know that we are on the wrong side in the struggle—and yet we continue there, held to our course by a false sense of honor; while true honor bids us acknowledge the situation, repent, and enlist on the side of God and righteousness.

Meanwhile, the forces of God march on, without us. In his great solitary way, our Captain tramps on to a lonely victory —for the forces will come, soon or late, and the triumph will be won: but we shall be missing in that triumph—unless our pride can be overmastered, and the power of sin or selfishness somehow broken in our lives.

Christianity is no sin-centred religion. It urges men to repent; it wakens them to a keener consciousness of sin than ever they knew before; but it is not a religion which revels in the badness of the race, glorying in human shame. Certain theologies of the past did this, it is true, thinking to glorify God in this way, and magnify the spontaneity of His grace. But this was no true note in Christianity, if we may test it by the religion of Jesus. The sense of sin is there to begin with, in the hearts of Jesus' followers, as in the heart of St. Paul, and his converts. And Jesus never minimized the significance of this sense. What he did was bring to men the assurance of forgiveness, the realization of God's goodness, the power to heal and to overcome. The erring woman he commanded, "Go, and sin no more." The bewildered disciples he comforted with the words, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." With St. Paul it is the same: a more profound sense of sin is hard to imagine than that which Paul possessed; and yet his pages echo his preaching of the Gospel of Freedom, of

reconciliation and release. "There is none righteous, no, not one"—as the Old Testament had said. And yet Christ died for us, even while we were the enemies of God, and "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the final persuasion of a man who started out with as intense a conviction of sin as anyone ever possessed.

Here, once more, is seen the fundamental mystery of Christianity: the sense of sin is not ignored, not palliated, not trifled with; it is met squarely and satisfactorily. It may be stimulated, but only for a wholesome purpose, and not for the sake merely of magnifying the enormity of past sin and present guilt. And it is met by the assurance of God's forgiveness—and, more than assurance, by the conscious *realization* of that forgiveness—and of new life, new power for good, new strength for effort, by which the old record shall be wiped out and our conduct made—what it has not been heretofore—pleasing to God and useful for the consummation of His purposes. How this is possible; how 'the record' is wiped out; how the new life comes—we do not know. That is mystery. But of the *fact*, we have all the assurance in the world.

## CHAPTER VIII

# *Religion and Suffering*

THE EVIL IN THE WORLD is at least two-fold: it is both moral and physical. There is the moral evil which occasions sin; and the physical evil which occasions suffering. It is true that moral evil occasions suffering as well as sin: certainly both kinds of evil have this much in common. And both are inimical to religion; they must be squarely faced by the religious man as problems to be met, obstacles to overcome. If we retain our earlier definition of religion, as 'life controlled or dominated by the consciousness of God,' we may say that sin affords both an obstacle and a problem in that it hinders the control; suffering, in that it clouds the consciousness.

It is not always true that physical suffering interferes with men's consciousness of God: there are persons who have gone through the intensest suffering and, 'like as gold in the furnace is tried and purified seven times in the fire,' their faith has emerged all the stronger, the purer, the more indomitable. The pain was a chastening, 'sent,' in fact, for this very purpose. Their strength has been made perfect in weakness: *virtus in infirmitate perficitur*. The fiery trial has served but to increase their dependence upon God, who has wonderfully endowed them with strength to withstand and endure.

But for one such person who has found a meaning and a value in his suffering, there are ten for whom it is stupid and meaningless and abhorrent: pure 'evil' and nothing more. And it is fairly inevitable that persons who rejoice in the blessed

experience just described do not look upon sickness, pain, and all the varieties of physical evil in the world which give rise to human suffering, as something 'from' God in the direct and explicit sense. God finds, as they themselves find, evil here; but God uses it to try, to test, to chasten the souls whom He loves and 'every son whom He receiveth.' No one, even the holiest or most resigned, will say that God created evil in order to prove the love and fidelity of his saints, any more than that He made sin to abound in order that grace might the more abound. Thus it is not as an explanation of the why and wherefore of suffering that piety affirms God's use of suffering to try the souls of His elect. The problem of suffering, therefore, still remains. And it is significant that in the hope of a future life, whether in Judaism or in Christianity, one triumphant note is the anticipated abolition of pain. In the Jewish Book of Wisdom we read, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them"; in the Christian Apocalypse, "God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

For the person who has not yet arrived at a clearly formed conviction of things spiritual; for whom God Himself, and His goodness, love, holiness, purity of purpose, are only part of a theory of life which he has never tried-out for himself; for such a person, the fact of suffering appears to be quite conclusive and final as the negation of God's goodness. And even if he is unwilling, in the end, to yield up altogether faith in his Creator, it becomes for him an insuperable problem. "How can it be—goodness and love, torment and agony, side by side in the same world?"

But in fact this is what we find in the world, altogether apart from belief in God. There is something here to ponder over, quite aside from the question whether or not God exists, or what are His attributes. How comes it that goodness and love, torment and agony *can* exist side by side? It is true,

they are not altogether mutually exclusive, like goodness and vice, love and hatefulness; but if love is what most men think it is, how can love endure the suffering of others? A man may discount his own personal pains readily enough: but it is quite intolerable that he should go on indifferent to the sufferings of those whom he loves. And if he is not indifferent, if he shares the suffering, if the physical pain of his loved ones occasions within himself an agony of sympathy equally painful, how can he endure it? Life itself would seem to be intolerable under such conditions: love, sympathy, suffering shared, lead directly to the demand that the suffering cease; and yet there is not the slightest possibility of removing the suffering from our world!

That this is a superficial view of suffering, one which ignores the patent facts of experience, and refuses to see how sympathy and love *grow* in the midst of suffering shared, one which is blind to the voluntary pains of motherhood and of military heroism—that this is only a half-view, leaving out of sight the deeper mystery of suffering, does not strike us as sufficient to condemn it. Love, if it were free to do so, would certainly abolish suffering instantly and forever. Pain has not enough meaning, enough value, to deserve a place in a moral world. For we instinctively share this view; however cleverly the importance of suffering for moral and spiritual ends is stated by the intellect, the heart affirms, "It is all a mistake." The whole thing is blind and purposeless; and the very best that could happen to our universe would be the substitution of more rational danger-signals than those of pain and suffering. They do exist side by side with love and goodness. But if only love and goodness were omnipotent! It has no real meaning that one boy gives his life for his country and lies in a hospital suffering torments for a year, and then goes through the rest of life blind, crippled and in constant pain; while another boy, equally devoted to his coun-

try and its cause, dies peacefully and without pain ten minutes after he arrives at the front. There is no meaning, no value, in the sufferings of countless millions of people all over the world, in consequence of the war. Here at least is plain, indisputable atrocity, with no moral excuse for it under heaven. If love were all-powerful, if love were God, all this would be changed at once, and the first gift to mankind of Love Enthroned would be a blissful and universal anaesthesia!

Here is a real problem; one which is age-long, but which has been brought to the very forefront of men's minds by the terrible catastrophe which overtook the civilized world in August, 1914, lasted for over four dark years, and in very truth affects us still, and will do so for years to come: World War II was the 'second phase' of this vast cataclysm. No platitudes or half-truths will help us solve it. No reflections on the disciplinary function of pain, or on the 'danger-signal' value which it has for physical life, will help us much now. For we are intelligent beings, and know better than to dash headlong into stone walls or leap naked into thorn-bushes. And we are too fully assured of the innocence of most sufferers: sure, at least, of this, that their sufferings are colossally incommensurate to their faults.

## § i

Sooner or later, in every broad consideration of the facts of life, we come face to face with the idea of God. Our outlook upon life and the surrounding world either shapes completely or at the least conditions our thought of God; and yet in the very idea of God are elements which conflict with the views which conditioned its development, and which seem to expand of their own accord, later on, without regard to the views in which the idea was nourished. The oak roots in the crevice between the rocks, where sufficient soil is to be

found; but as it plunges its tentacles deeper into the earth, the rocks are moved out of place and pushed aside.

We have already spoken of the conception of God which the modern world, in its search for completer reality and under the stimulus of notions derived partly from scientific and philosophical theories and partly from personal experience, seems destined to adopt. He is no longer the somewhat too complacent and beneficent 'Moral Governor of the Universe,' the Absolute of an idealistic philosophy, the *Patêr Pantocratôr* of the later pagan Greek theology. He is become, instead, the Great Ally in the world-struggle of light against darkness, of virtue against vice, of righteousness against injustice; and He is supremely personal, involved in the affairs of men, with something at stake in the progress and success of the business of the universe. He is supreme; all the older categories of His Being, Omniscience, Infinity, and so on, are recognized as designed to convey the notion of His supremacy. We have no intention of discarding them; but there is something in His Nature, His character, which such philosophical attributes fail to express. We are apt to lose sight of His utter Freedom, or else we understand freedom in a sense which the actual conditions of our own existence contradict, under the burden of such unimaginable attributes. He is free, and yet for some reason He has limited His own freedom, hedged it about with conditions and difficulties: only His moral purpose seems adequate to explain such self-limitation. He has, as it were, descended from the throne of the universe in order to mingle more freely with His subjects. We are sure that He is still supreme—what would become of us if He were not?—and yet He effects his purposes through moral alliance with His creatures rather than through the fiats of Omnipotence. The ancient Hebrew Scriptures caught something of this marvellous trait in the Divine Character; they sang of Him:

Thy way is in the sea,
And Thy paths in the great waters;
Thy footsteps are not known. [Nevertheless,]
Thou leddest Thy people like sheep,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.
(Psalm lxxvii. 19 f. Cf. Psalm lxviii. 32-35.)

It is a sublime description of the majesty and the humility of God!

Hence the old and still popular form in which the sovereignty of God was conceived, His absolute 'Monarchy,' must be given up. It does not correspond with the facts of life. It is ten-fold more of a problem than a solution. No matter what shudderings over the prospect of dualism may rack our souls, the Greek conception of the Universal Monarch, enthroned in the skies or 'above the skies,' whose will is irresistible, whose wisdom 'sweetly disposes all things,' has served its time and is today inadequate. It is embedded in much of the poetry of religion; its traces run through many of our hymns; its delicious attraction for the imagination blinds us to its inadequacy for every-day living. We do not hanker for a finite God, such as Mr. Wells once proposed in his book, *God the Invisible King*. We have no desire for a dualistic universe. But the circumstances of our life require a God who is something more than a remote abstraction, or a contradiction of power and refusal to exercise it, of wisdom and inconsiderateness. He must be more than Infinite!—a God with finite relations and purposes; and the dualism of the universe must not be his making, or even the result of his toleration—*He* must be on one side, and that side bound to win, and actually winning now!

It may well be that we shall discover that this idea of God, which seems no doubt thoroughly novel, is older than we had thought. I fancy that if once we scrape off the incrustation of many centuries, during which Christianity has lived

under the surviving influence of the philosophy of the ancient Graeco-Roman world, we shall find something like what we are seeking in the idea of God with which the early Christian Church started out in history.[1] That idea is too easily disposed of as crude and anthropomorphic, the idea of a people narrowed within the horizons of old Palestine, without sufficient political experience or sufficient cosmopolitanism of outlook. But it is worth while examining the idea, as it was held in ancient Judaic and early Christian times, for here was a religion,[2] if ever there was one, which took full cognizance of the facts of life and refused to close its eyes to human suffering. We do not marvel at this when we remember the experience of oppression and the acts of martyrdom which run through the annals of that faith. We marvel less when we consider that it was the living faith of plain men, and not the abstraction of the schools. No one was ever moved to crime in the name of a philosophic abstraction, nor to the enduring of oppression; because, as Mr. Balfour remarked, "For the sake of such an Absolute, no man has ever yet been moved to do anything at all." [3]

We must return from the metaphysical idealism of late Greek philosophy (which, as I say, still governs much of our popular thought of God) to the more ethical and more realistic theology of primitive Christianity: that which was presupposed in the idea of the Messiah. Here it was frankly recognized that although God is ideally King of the Universe, He is not so in present fact. He is, rather, the King of the Future—either Himself personally, or through the vicegerency of His Messiah. At present, a part of the universe has rebelled against His rule: there are the evil spirits, with Satan at their head, working all the harm they are able to accomplish; there is the human race, with sinning Adam as its progenitor, and with the evil impulse of the heart complicating and defeating all its motions towards the good. God is in

conflict with the forces of evil—Jesus looked upon himself and his work as the outward manifestation of this victorious struggle: "I saw Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. . . . How can one enter the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. . . . If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you." And God is certain, as Jesus knew, to triumph. This saves the Gospel from the charge of dualism: there is no permanent division in the world; it is only temporary, and God is even now, by the conquest of evil, by the binding of the strong man and the freeing of his victims, healing the breach.

Thus Messianism, the oldest Christian theology (though largely dispossessed later on by Greek and mediaeval theology) is strictly a theology of history, a theodicy. The seers who gave utterance to this theology were men whose highest endeavor was to 'justify the ways of God to men'; but for that very reason, they were unable to divorce their theology from the common experience of their fellows. Naturally, such a theology is truer to life—if not to the *a priori* logic of the intellect—because truer to moral experience, than that of Greek metaphysics. What if Christianity had adopted some other philosophy, some world-outlook more consonant with its earlier view of things, than the popular Platonic idealism of the second to fifth centuries of our era, as the basis of its formulated theology! It is idle to ask such a question; but it is still not impossible to hark back to the origins, and take our start once more, to search out a theory of life which shall find room for the central element in the ancient Christian idea of God and the world.

The logical implications of this theology have never been fully worked out, its bearings on morals and the sciences—for example, on cosmology. Perhaps they can never be worked out; for the world, life, and consciousness itself, are too vast

a mystery. But it is a working theology, and it squares with human experience. We are sure God did not create evil. Yet we are sure that evil is here. And we are sure that evil cannot continue forever: we are sure of this because we are sure that God is against evil, and that He will conquer it in the end. For an End there must be—a glorious, final, victorious End and Consummation. We all believe this, because we believe in life. And what is life, what is life *for,* unless it is to achieve an end: a full, complete and satisfying achievement, here or elsewhere, toward which God and the individual, and the universe itself, are striving?

§ ii

Perhaps no greater attempt has ever been made toward the solution of this problem, and the working out of this theology, than that which we find recorded in the ancient Jewish literature. This is the greatest and most permanent value in the Old Testament: it records the process by which this view arose out of the simple and accepted notions of moral retribution which were held in early times, when suffering was directly attributed to sin, and therefore explained and justified in individual life. Its general world-view is thoroughly religious and moral, and its realm of ends is increasingly, and at last wholly, futuristic. According to the Old Testament, God created the universe, and saw that all in it was good. Then came sin. Whence it came, whether spontaneously from within or intrusively from without, is never once suggested. The naive old story in Genesis went no further than the assertion, "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made." But *how* it came is told, in the narrative which for ninety generations has stood as the classic parable of the process of temptation and fall in the life of the individual.[4]

Such is the view which the Old Testament offers of the origin of sin and suffering in the world. God is good. The world is good—or was good until sin came. But henceforth, "cursed is the ground for thy (i.e. sinful man's) sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." And upon woman was pronounced the penalty of painful childbirth, together with the thoroughly Oriental status of sex-inequality and sex-disability. It is not necessary to suppose that each and every writer of the Old Testament was familiar with this ancient Semitic folk-myth. Indeed, the probability is strongly against such a supposition. But whatever views are advanced are akin to this in essential points. The fortunes of Israel, or rather its misfortunes, the fate in this world of each individual, however pious, are determined by this fact of sin, and by the great rift between the ideal and the actual, between God's plan and what really happened to that plan, which sin effected in the world.

But it is characteristic of Hebrew thought that it could not remain forever in such a moral *impasse*. The earlier and widely popular notion was that everyone did, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, receive his just deserts in this world. Sin and suffering went hand in hand. If facts did not seem to warrant this idea, then the facts needed to be altered to suit. If the apparently godly and virtuous man suffered evil, even as the ungodly and wicked, then there was something more to be said about his apparent virtue. God would not punish the genuinely godly. We find the idea as late as the Christian Fourth Gospel, where the disciples ask, seeing the man born blind, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" It is significant that Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"—an an-

swer which simply cuts the ground from under the position taken by the questioners (John ix. 2-3).

This situation makes possible and in fact leads up to the argument of the Book of Job, where the indubitably good man suffers all 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' which, by every canon of moral judgment, recognized at the time, belonged only to the positively bad man. The author of Job never solved the problem, save with the conventional happy ending—Job's restoration to his former prosperity, and the dramatically necessary but fictitious assurance that he lived happily ever after. But one important advance in thought was made by the Book of Job: suffering is *not always* the reward of sin; or rather, secret sin is not always the explanation of apparently unmerited open misfortune. And so the really vexing question remained as it was before. No other writer, no other nation, ever grappled with the problem so indomitably, and with such courage and confidence, as the author of Job and his contemporaries.

The cry, not of despair, but of dogged and persevering faith, which goes up from the Psalms, echoes across the centuries to this very day, voicing the wounded and yet unrelenting faith of countless disappointed hearts. Upon the very title-page of the Jewish Psalter might almost be written the words of a still later Jew, himself also a poet and seer: "How long, O Master, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The highest confidence of the martyrs is still that of Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!"

But the situation could never be permanent, nor could it pass on from the devout and faithful psalmists to the people at large, and become an essential part of the popular religion. Such practical despair of life, albeit coupled with the unshakable conviction of God's sovereignty, is impossible for popular religion—i.e. for religion of any kind save that of the cloister, which the psalmists represent.

Hence we are not surprised to find, toward the close of the Old Testament period, a growing confidence in the future. This was two-fold in its bearing: it embraced both the nation, or the community of the pious, and also the pious individuals who belonged to the community. The nation, though at present crushed and dependent, subject to foreign dominion, would some day be vindicated as Jehovah's chosen. The other nations should in turn be subdued, and bring tribute to Jerusalem. "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The pages of the prophets had been filled with resplendent pictures of the future restoration and triumph. And for the individual, especially the individual who had suffered in innocence or died a martyr, there was the increasingly certain promise of resurrection and reward. There are not many traces of this expectation of *individual* future recompense in the Old Testament; but the tendency was there; and the writings which go under the name of deutero-canonical and pseudepigraphical, coming from the centuries just preceding the Christian era, testify to the place which it came to hold in popular religious thought.

Thus the idea of future reward for the righteous individual was still a new idea when the Old Testament closed; but the idea of a national restoration in the future was far from new. It is found almost in the beginning of the great period of literary and religious development in Hebraism—about 750 B.C., long before 'Job' and the Psalms with their acute sense of injustice to the individual. In fact, the idea may go back farther still, into the dim and misty dawn of Oriental antiquity. "The Day of the Lord" was popularly expected, as the day when Israel's God should gird himself to battle and subdue his own and his people's enemies. No doubt the very conception of a tribal God—for such was Jehovah to the early Israelites—carries with it a crude kind of Messianism: the expectation of a time in the future when God will subdue his enemies and become supreme, conferring upon his own

people every conceivable blessing of prosperity, longevity, numerous posterity, peace and plenty. It is possible, though this is speculation, that the Messianic idea also formed an element, in one form or another, in the most ancient religions of the Indo-European peoples.

But however the idea arose, or whencesoever it came, and whatever its crude primitive form may have been, the hope of great things in the future characterizes the religion of the Old Testament, and represents something of its contribution to the religious thought of the world. This is the feature which we see gradually becoming dominant in the history of Old Testament religion. And if every development is to be defined in terms of its final achievement, as Aristotle suggested, then this *was* the religion of the Old Testament.

§ iii

Moreover, this was the background of the religion of the New Testament as well. The New Testament represents with some additions the collected remains of the literature of the Christian Church in the first two generations of its development. It affords us the documents and sources with which to reconstruct, in some measure, the course of that development. The Christian movement, as everyone knows, began in Palestine in the time of Tiberius Caesar. The movement had its first beginning during the sultry days of the Roman procurators, when the brilliant dynasty of the Maccabees had long been forgotten and the combination of national quasi-independence and tyrannous oppression under Herod was likewise a thing of the past. The rushing mighty wind of a new spirit swept across the land, from Judea to Galilee, with the appearance and preaching of a new prophet, John bar-Zachariah, in the wilderness. The burden of his preaching was repentance, conversion, amendment, active and actual righteousness before

the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord. The Judge was at hand; his judgment would be speedy and final—"already the axe is laid at the root of the trees!" In response to such preaching, a wave of enthusiasm and of response moved the whole country. For the first time in generations, a prophet sent from God had appeared. At once he gained multitudes of followers, who received baptism at his hands in the river Jordan, and set about to make ready for the coming Messianic Judgment and the Reign of God. His preaching was profoundly moral; he demanded actual change of the hearts and minds of men; he stated in the most explicit and uncompromising terms the conditions which the God of Righteousness laid down. But the emphasis, the feeling which gave his preaching mandatory and peremptory character, was the expectation which he and his followers alike shared of the immediate coming of the new day.

It was upon this tidal movement that Christianity was launched. The Baptizer had been thrust in prison by the wicked Herod Antipas. But Jesus of Nazareth had shortly before received baptism at the hands of John, and now stood ready to carry on his work, though in a different form and manner. For Jesus was more than another prophet or baptizer: he had, at his own baptism, become conscious of a higher call—he was to be himself in some sense the expected One, destined to realize the best that John and the earlier prophets had anticipated of the Messiah. John had been the returning Elijah: his task had been to prepare the way; but it was Jesus himself who was to inaugurate the divine Reign. Throughout Jesus' teaching the futuristic emphasis was fully maintained. His first message on his return to Galilee was that of John: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." This was the central emphasis in all his work of preaching, teaching and healing. The Gospel was first of all glad tidings of the coming Reign of God; and round about this idea and

expectation gathered all his instructions, in parable and precept, concerning the character requisite in those who should enter the Kingdom when it came. This is not the place to enter into a description of Jesus' teaching. There are plentiful expositions at hand today—and the New Testament itself is accessible to everyone. What we are now concerned with is the attitude which Jesus—or the religion of the New Testament and the early Church, as derived from Jesus—took to the question of physical suffering.

We may say first of all that the question was no problem in theology or speculation. So far as we know, Jesus made no effort to solve the problem of its presence in the world. Nor did he ever, so far as we know, accept it as part of the divinely constituted order of the universe, and good in itself. The whole trend of Hebraic thought, which he himself shared while he also in certain ways revolutionized it, was against the acceptance of suffering as a good, as necessary and essential and of final reality. No Jew could look upon suffering as other than an evil. It might be the result of sin, as divine retribution; or it might be the punishment of the fathers' sins upon the children, unto the third and fourth and later generations; but it was evil, not to be tolerated or endured, if a way of release could be found. Thus wholesome was the attitude of that ancient people and of its religion.

If sickness and suffering had been looked upon altogether as the visitation of God, as the requisite chastisement of the Lord—as our fathers thought at the time of the earliest English Prayer Books—then it is hard to see how Jesus could have set about at once, in his ministry, to relieve suffering and free those oppressed by evil spirits. The two notions, possession by evil spirits and the visitation of God, are however in considerable contradiction. And Jesus set about at once "to proclaim release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach good

tidings to the poor, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 18-19). He looked upon suffering and disease as the work of Satan; it was not the sin of the individual, or of his parents, but the plague of the devil which wrought such havoc in life. And he was here to undo the works of the devil. 'By the finger of God' he cast out demons: this was sign enough that the Kingdom of God was nigh, and in a measure already come.

Even his own pathway of suffering and death, which later opened before him as the shadow of the cross fell upon his career, was not a good in itself: it was no call to heroic asceticism, a 'crucifying of the world to himself,' which he felt within him. It was the destined way, foreshadowed in the prophets, growing in clearness as he pondered the judgments and decrees of the Father; the ancient religion which made suffering the result of sin supplied also the principle that one might bear the sufferings of the many, and so remove sin by suffering for their—and not his own—sins. Suffering was not a good in itself, but an evil; and he might endure the evil that the many might be saved. He saw the redemptive value in his own sufferings and death.

How this should be possible is difficult for men in the present age to understand; we cannot fathom the mystery of such a motive to self-sacrifice: and yet, given the religious ideas of that ancient time, the inherited ideas of countless generations, the ideas germane to a religion steeped in the theory and practice of sacrifice, the motive becomes comprehensible. At the same time, we are willing to admit that all the mysteries of existence, certainly the mysteries of moral existence, are not fathomed by men today: and it is possible that some earlier age, though cruder than our own in civilization yet more profoundly realistic and simple in its religion, may on this particular side of things have penetrated more deeply into the central mystery. We can admit this while at the same time

we feel that all the theologies of atonement, even the theologies of the earliest days, do no more than shadow forth in the language of the intellect something of the value which men have actually found in Christ's death upon the cross. Yet if we question the records, fragmentary and unsatisfying as they are, we can assure ourselves that it was Jesus himself who first of all recognized these values in his passion. Not that the passion itself, the suffering, is redemptive: but the motive of obedience which led him up to and on through the passion. Numberless persons have suffered more intense physical pain than Christ suffered on the cross; many a mother has endured whole days of intenser suffering than Christ's six hours on Calvary. But Christ's suffering was redemptive because of the motive and purpose behind it all: so far behind it all that Christian believers have not scrupled to say that for this very end Christ came into the world—it was his motive before he entered the lists of humanity. And even in his sufferings, even while he looked upon them as an evil to be endured, it was for the sake of the end to be achieved, the redemption of 'the many,' that he endured them. There was still this relation to the coming Kingdom: once sin was done away, God's true Reign might begin, when sorrow and sighing and all the penalties of sin should forever and completely be done away. It was just as futuristic a view as the Gospel had set forth two years before in Galilee: the Kingdom of God is coming.

This is the essential element, if we can seize upon any one element as such, in the teaching and work of Christ and of early Christianity. It was what theologians call 'eschatological': It had to do with the coming end of the old age, the dawn of the new: it meant not world-revolution but world-renovation; a renovation which begins in the hearts of men but does not end till God has taken His great power and reigns supreme, when evil, sin, suffering, sorrow, and all that the

devil has wrought here in God's world shall be forever done away. Whether in Judaism or in Christianity, this hope (for it was essentially a hope, not a philosophy) meant suffering for a time, followed by future triumph. "If we suffer with Him (with Christ or with God), we shall also reign with Him," is the whole of Jewish and early Christian eschatology in a nutshell.

The crude and vulgar Millennarianism which we find ever and again reviving along the fringes of Christian progress has little to do with the heart of the Christian hope; it is only a caricature, emphasizing the worst of its outworn forms. It cultivates a social despair in place of a social idealism; it sets the expectation of catastrophe over against the anticipations of a better day; and it welcomes the signs of degeneracy and dissolution in society as proofs that the world is growing old and even now falling into decay. The vigorous and wholehearted attitude of Jesus can nowhere be traced in such pessimism. It represents, as a historical phenomenon, the disappointments of men who set their hopes on earthly benefits expected in the World to Come, and consequently had no heart for daily toil in the world which is here and now.

§ iv

Suffering is not a good, but an evil, in itself. This the world and the Church alike recognize: the Church with its hospitals, the modern world with its medical research, bending the noblest efforts of the sciences to the prevention and cure of disease. Suffering is bad, and cannot be an end in itself. But the sufferings of hero and martyr are glorious—because they are sufferings for an end in view. Austerities and self-mutilations for the sake of the suffering itself are wrong: and certain types of asceticism are vicious and depraved. But suffering which is self-inflicted in the sense that it identifies

itself with the sufferings of others for a redemptive end—like the sufferings, for example, of Christ, on one hand, or of Father Damien among the Hawaiian lepers, on the other—have a meaning, and are truly described as precious and divine. It is the end or purpose of such suffering which lifts it out of the region of stupidity and futility, and gives it a new significance: such asceticism is glorified. Such is also, in a degree, the milder asceticism which some men require to undergo in order to subdue the flesh and purify desire. Only in one of these two senses was Carlyle right in referring to Christianity as 'the Worship of Sorrow.' It does not magnify sorrow or suffering as an end in itself, but as a means to some higher and worthy end.

But in this sense, also, the consolation which is afforded by Christianity to those who are helpless victims of unmerited suffering—through identifying their sufferings with the redemptive sufferings of Christ—is more than an emotion-born fancy. They may in fact "fill up on their part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in their flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church"—of which they are a part. Theirs are one with the sufferings of creation, which "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God . . . groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." They are urged to look for some *meaning* in their pain. They are urged to lift it out of the region of blindness and stupidity in which pure suffering—to no apparent purpose and with no end in view—exists, one with the unmeaning agony of the lower creation, from the beginning until now. They are urged to find in it, not an end, but the means to an end.

There are three ways of meeting suffering, and—which is the main thing—of finding, or recovering, confidence in God, in spite of the evil in the world. (1) We may, with certain modern schools of thought, deny that any such thing as evil, pain, or suffering, exists. But such an attitude requires a

philosophy which does violence to common sense: we know that evil is here. If it were not, such a philosophy would itself be uncalled-for and unheard-of: it is the very fact of evil in the world and in our own experience which drives men to posit a world in which only Mind, Intelligence, and Truth exist, and to substitute it for the world we know every day. (2) We may meet it as the fatalist and Stoic met it; we may accept it grimly and without complaint, as a bit of very hard luck, to be handled best by ignoring it as far as possible. The Mohammedan has this attitude, as well as the Stoic; and likewise the old-fashioned Calvinist, with his severe theology of election, of the unlimited divine sovereignty. Much of the popular philosophy of today reflects this attitude. "You will never die till your time comes." "Whatever happens is for the best." But such a theory is hard to square with one's conception of God, as we have tried to show in an earlier chapter: it sacrifices the conception of a loving God, and One who at the same time faces facts just as earnestly as we do, to the requirements of a theory. (3) The third way in which evil may be met is by cheerful acceptance, with as light a heart as possible, not as if it were a final good, nor a final evil, but as nothing *final* at all!—the means to an end, and nothing more. That end may be self-discipline, it may be the succor of others, it may be a greater sympathy, it may be only our personal contact with the central mystery of existence—consciousness born through pain, faith born in suffering, redemption wrought through some form or other of vicarious passion—at any rate, it is accepted. And the end is found to be not simply some private or social gain in a quarter untouched by what has been endured—like sympathy or self-discipline—but the end brings with it the abolition of pain itself. We find even now that certain sympathies annihilate suffering, as the sympathy of a mother for her child; will it be surprising if the End, in another and higher world if not

in this one, not only wipes out pain fully and forever, but even the memory of it? For the remembrance of suffering is painful, and hence it must be forgotten—even as we begin to forget it in this life. As a matter of fact, suffering is speedily forgotten, by most normal persons. And if in the perfected life, as Dante dreamed, men shall forget even their past sins, must we not think that the memory likewise of past suffering shall vanish out of recollection?

## CHAPTER IX

# *Religion and Mysticism*

No one need look, today, beyond the booksellers' catalogues to assure himself that a revival of mysticism is taking place in the religious world. The steady stream of books on this subject which began twenty years and more ago grows wider as it ceaselessly flows on. People have grown weary, we are told, of the old theologies of Protestantism: Evangelical, Calvinistic, High Church, Low Church, and so on. The endless controversies occasioned by these overly-rational and clean-cut systems have gradually surfeited the souls of men unversed in theology. A hunger has arisen for the pure word of the Lord, the Bread of Life; and we have found ourselves willing to sacrifice the neatly compacted schemes of theology and ecclesiastical organization which our fathers had bequeathed to us for even scant crumbs of the true and living Bread.

Now the case is hardly as extreme as this, at least so most of us can say; but there is little doubt that a theology or an ecclesiastical system from which the breath of life has departed soon becomes a gaunt skeleton—and it is undeniable that many men have found this true in their own experience. Unless it mediates life, it is a burden and—if persisted in after it has lost its meaning—a snare to the soul and the conscience. And it is inevitable that mysticism, a raw, crude, but vital and first-hand experience of religion, shall appear and reappear whenever our intellectualized religion loses touch with reality. When the centre of religious life and interest has shifted, as

it has certainly shifted in the last fifty years, then the old things begin to pass away, and new forms spring up, more genuinely embodying the thought and feeling of the new time. For theology is but the intellectual expression of religion, the logical unravelling and unfolding of its implications, the weaving together into some system and by some ideal pattern of its scattered data, the projection into the world of rational ideas of the fruits of heart-searching passion and of deep, powerful, but unreasoning devotion.

When theology becomes unreal, it is not time to despair of religion; it is time, rather, to clear the ground for a new theology. That the Christian denominations in America do not now hold to the rigidly articulated formulas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—as, for example, the precise method of administering baptism, or the bearing of God's free choice and election upon the future salvation of the individual, the indispensable requirement of conversion, or the divine sanction of one form of liturgical worship only—that Christians today do not make theological formulas the standards of their several organizations, is not proof that they are disloyal, or losing their faith, or anything of the sort. It means simply that the centre of interest in religious thought has shifted; a new flood of life is preparing to break upon us. The unity of the Church comes once more within the horizon of possibility; and with the new day, a new and more perfect formulation of the data of faith will become not only possible but necessary.

Meanwhile, and as signs of the new day begin to appear, it is not wonderful at all that men turn to mysticism to satisfy their hunger for new life, and to escape the rigidity, fixity, lifelessness of the schemes of salvation which once pulsed with vitality for our fathers, but which are now dead and past revival, so far as their outward formulation is concerned. It has ever been so in the past. In the midst of the most arid

periods of religious history, or on the eve of great changes in men's views of religion, mysticism has been found springing up like a refreshing fountain. We look for a great day soon to come, for a greater day than has ever yet dawned on the earth; a day of wider usefulness for the Church; a day when men shall 'turn unto the Lord' as never before; when the scientific and political achievements of mankind shall furnish the outward conditions of a social order truer to the ideal, nearer to the heart and mind of God, nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven. But the day has not come, as yet; nor the theology, certainly, which its reaction on the minds of men will necessitate. Whatever its character, it will be reflected in theology and religious thinking, just as feudalism, imperialism, and other social orders—dominating all intellectual life whatsoever in their times—have been reflected in the religious thought of the past. And this is so not because theology is merely a by-product of social organization and of political thought, but because men can think of God, and interpret their own religious experience, only in the terms of their own daily life.

Until the really accurate and satisfactory new theology is produced, until religious values are stated once more in terms of common thought, we cannot expect anything other than a wholesome interest in religious mysticism.—And we welcome it!

§ i

What is mysticism? It may be described as the way in which men attain or maintain direct and conscious contact with God, without the help of external media, sacraments, rites, societies, or even books. The mystic seeks union with God within himself, in the silence, in the darkness, drawing the blinds of the senses, cutting himself off from all else, all

things and all other persons. "There is neither speech nor language; but their voices are heard among them."

> If thou wouldst name the Nameless, and descend
> Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
> There, brooding by the central altar, thou
> May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
> By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise;
> For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake,
> That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
> But never yet hath dipt into the Abysm.[1]

It is only natural that there should be various types of mysticism, since at least the manner of describing this process of direct contact with God will be determined by the character and mental habits of the mystic himself. And such in fact we do find: there are Christian mystics, and pagan; there are orthodox mystics, and heretical; there are sensuous mystics, and refined; there are effeminate mystics, and manly; there are mystics with abundance of artistic feeling, and mystics whose eyes of flesh never recognize the difference between a bare whitewashed cell and a garden of trees and flowers, save to prefer the former. We find mystics who take for granted the traditional theological scheme, and fit in their own experiences into its framework. There are others for whom everything is to be discovered *de novo,* and the traditional ideas of religion are impatiently pushed aside. Likewise there are mystics who enjoy an uninterrupted communion with the Divine; at any moment they can feel themselves transported, as it were, to heaven. And there are others to whom the vision is rare, and then sealed up; and like Elijah in the desert, they 'go in the strength of that meat forty days unto Horeb, the Mount of God,' until the next vision or communication is vouchsafed them.

All the varieties of religious life seem to be represented in the mystics. There is no previous calculation possible as to

their experience. The barrenest, severest system we can imagine may supply the environment of a high and heaven-kindled enthusiasm. There is no telling in what deserts these oases appear. And in their own descriptions of their experience, all the varieties of religious life are to be found. The classical descriptions of the states of feeling which go by the names of 'the state of grace,' 'conviction of sin,' repentance, perseverance, and so on, are all to be found in mystical works. This is the more remarkable when we consider the additional fact that only a small number of such persons have ever written down their experiences.

Now this does not mean that mysticism is simply equivalent to personal religion, as contrasted with the formal and institutional kind. It is something more than that. For formal and institutional religion may be thoroughly personal; it may be the subject of intense personal conviction, it may enter into and affect the most secret moments of a man's whole life. But mysticism, while it is personal religion, and may also never lead to severance of connection with institutional religion, is a type of religious life which apparently gathers up into itself all religious experience whatsoever, and presents it in a state of incandescence, where before and elsewhere was only flame and smoke, and a slow and fitful fire. The experience seems to follow regular lines; the mystics themselves have reduced their knowledge of it to something of a science, and have defined the stages through which the soul usually passes on its way toward illumination and perfection. They have even undertaken to devise methods by which the mystical life might be cultivated, and the channels of access kept open between the soul and the Eternal.

For example, the Flemish mystic, Antoinette Bourignon of Lille, wrote as follows: "Resignation consists in a cessation from all things, that we may receive God only. There needs no more than to cease and to receive; for all our cares and

vexations or activities for things of this life are hindrances which stifle the operations which God would cause in our soul. We must be quiet and rest, that we may suffer the Holy Spirit to act alone." [2]—"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength!" All the mystics have echoed this sentiment and made it their cardinal principle.

But this is only the first stage, for many who enter upon the Inner Way. There follows it, in most cases, a period of discouragement and despair. The first success is followed by a failure which seems to blot out all that was dear, even the ideals for which the soul had struggled on bravely. Madame Guyon, in the seventeenth century, went through such successive stages in the mystical life, the first or successful stage lasting six years, and the second or unsuccessful for six more. This is what has been called the Negative Way, in which the soul is crushed by the burden—not of its sins, as we might expect, but of its own self-existence! The soul longs to be free, from self, from desire, from the bondage of ever seeking ends lower than God Himself. "O to be nothing!" the mystic sighs—

> God Himself is Nothing,
> Untouched by the Now and the Here;
> The more you seize upon Him,
> The more does He disappear.

So sang the "Cherubic Wanderer" of Angelus Silesius (John Scheffler of Breslau, seventeenth century).

No doubt this is strong meat for babes, if it be not utterly incomprehensible! Here is faith, ardent devotion, but no object of faith or devotion! Much that the mystics have written by no means tallies with Silesius' description of God —we can hardly call it a 'notion' of God: yet Meister Eckhart writes of "the still desert of the Godhead, where never was seen difference, neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost; where

there is no one at home, yet where the spark of the soul is more at peace than in itself." Such descriptions of God can come only from the lips of those who have entered upon the *via negativa,* and are determined to strip off all the veils which hide Reality from their eyes, even though in the unveiling the Reality lose all form and semblance for the eyes of the mind. Madame Guyon wrote in her letters: "You must accustom yourself to walk by pure faith, which means to walk without knowing and without sensible feeling. . . . Do not listen to your reason, or to the reason of your friends, but follow without hesitating the inclination the Saviour gives you. . . . The soul must cease to walk by its own steps and enter the quiet of the Lord. . . . The soul must let itself be nakedly guided. . . . Go forward blindly and cease to trust the guidance of reason, even enlightened reason." [3]

And yet we must ask of those who have explored so deeply beneath the surface, and who profess a glowing faith albeit without any object of faith—at least, without any object with which the intellect can deal—if after all their faith has not some object, viz. the soul's own state, the state of grace, or disgrace (with a prospect and hope of restoration), acceptance, approval, *or whatever makes the way worth while?* The soul is not able to say explicitly, "I trust God," or "I trust myself"; but only, "I trust the higher light, and the reality of the state which is being experienced." God is not entirely lost hold of, then; for He is held by anticipation, as it were. Hope's anchor holds, when Faith breaks and lets go in the strain. And in this stage, the 'Dark Night of the Soul,' the mystic can say with the Psalmists, "All Thy floods and storms are gone over me! . . . The sorrows of death compassed me! . . . Nevertheless, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. . . . Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, until this tyranny be overpast!" It is darkness, and not light; it is shadow, with the face of God averted; it is almost despair that he finds

in his secret heart; yet all the while "Thou are a place to hide me in; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. . . . And them that trust Thee shalt thou hide privily by thine own presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues!" The soul is steeled and forged in the fires of such affliction; but it comes out from them with a confidence unshakable, a conviction founded upon something more than opinion or knowledge—which are debateable in 'the strife of tongues'—and quite irresistible and unfailing.

The third and last stage is that of final success. If the first state was positive and the second negative, this is again positive but raised to the *n*th power. It is like the discus-thrower who raises the weight, lowers it, then casts it with all his might; or, more accurately, it is like a field of winter-wheat, sown in the fall, when it springs up for a time, is bitten by frost and cold, lies for long months under the snow, only to revive, flourish, and bear its grain in due season. This state is final and triumphant. The veils have been stripped from Reality, which now stands naked before the soul. The times of illusion and of disillusion are alike past; the pain of knowledge is forgotten, and the pain of slow un-learning as well. The soul is now no longer near God, favored by God, united to God—nor yet abandoned to His wrath, cast out forever from His presence; it can only be said that the soul now *is* God. Madame Guyon described it as 'a God-me taking the place of the old self-me, so that the soul "lived in God as we live in the air without being conscious of the air." ' According to St. John of the Cross, "One might say, in a sense, that the soul gives God to God, for she gives to God all that she receives of God, and He gives Himself to her. This is the mystical love-gift, wherewith the soul repayeth all her debt." Or, in the quaint language of John Tauler of Strasbourg, in the fourteenth century, "Because the soul is a creature, it must

cast itself out of itself, and in its hour of contemplation must cast out all saints and angels, because these are creatures and hinder the union of the soul with God. It must be rid of all things, in need of nothing, that it may come to God in His likeness; for nothing unites so much as likeness, and receives its color so soon. God will then give Himself to the faculties of the soul, so that the soul grows in the likeness of God and takes His color. The image resides in the soul's powers, the likeness in its virtues, and the divine color in its union. Thus its union becomes so intimate that it does not work its works in its creature form, but in its divine form, wherein it is united to God. Its very works are taken from it, and God works all its works in His form. Finally, while it beholds God and becomes more intimately united with Him, the union is of such a nature that God empties Himself altogether into it, and draws it so completely into Himself that it no longer has any distinct recognition of virtue or vice, or of the marks by which it knows what it is itself." [4]

This is the final stage, the stage of affirmation, of the 'Everlasting Yea.' From a similar standpoint, St. Paul could write, "To me, to live is Christ; to die is gain." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . . ." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And St. John, "In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men"; he places in the mouth of Christ the words, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing"; "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." The experience back of such language is mystical; whether it was Christ or the Father who represented Deity for the mind of the mystic, the experience is the same, and even the language hardly varies.—It was in such experience that the worship of Christ was cradled, not

in the atmosphere of popular paganism with its 'Olympian' deities and decadent state religions.

§ ii

But is this anything more, at bottom, than a positive knuckling-down to acceptance of the universe and the 'will of God,' i.e. to *what comes?* Of course, there are and will be emotional accompaniments, as in most cases of the mystics whose biographies we know at all. But these are partly temperamental, partly the result of austerities forced upon the body and of habits of mind acquired by the long discipline of a mystical life. And is not the final stage, that of illumination and union (or identification) merely the outburst of health and wholesomeness of mind in the cramped quarters which the 'Negative Way' has forced upon the soul? That is, the mind can endure negation just so long and no longer, as the body can endure austerity of mood or practice just so long and no longer. At last, the indicator swings over toward the positive pole, as the spirit charges with power which negation cannot longer restrain. But in doing so, the new life, the illumination, cannot take the form suited to the original stage, the more normal and perhaps secular type of religious life; it has perforce to take a form suited to the modifications effected through the mystic experience already undergone. That is why the findings of the ultimate stage of mystical experience are so often unintelligible and unappropriable by ordinary religious persons. The very language is full of incomprehensible words—as we have already observed in the poem of Silesius; there are ideas which transcend common sense, feelings which we are assured are strictly ineffable. For instance, the affirmation that God Himself is Non-Being; or that faith is most truly faith when it has no object! Such statements are over our heads, and mean little to the majority

of us. And yet, *for the mystics themselves*, there seems to be much significance in the words. There are no doubt ranges of experience of which many of us are wholly incapable. There are worlds of reality we cannot explore. And since we cannot, and have no call to adjust our conduct relatively to the conditions which obtain in those worlds, it is just as well that we do not understand. We will not persecute the mystics: God forbid! But we will not be led to imitate what we can never know and feel 'from the heart out.' [5]

No doubt there are dangers in mysticism, that is, in mysticism of the religious kind:—for there is a mysticism of poetry and art which, though akin to religious mysticism in expression, shares nothing in common with it in practice. For the mystic ventures everything, life and all its goods, upon the quest for God within. If he fails, he fails not in mode of expression, but in that which is to be expressed: the whole spiritual life in him is shipwreck. The first danger, then, which the mystic encounters is the danger of mistake. He trusts the inner light: "but if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" He is as open as other men to delusion and self-deception. Again, the unnatural experiences of others more favored may be coveted: what can be more harmful for spiritual progress than this? It cheapens the soul to lust after signs and wonders, like the evil generation of which Christ spoke. To crave personal satisfactions and advantages in the midst of eternal life and the quest for God is like carving one's initials on the rocks at Niagara or in the dome of the Capitol. A third danger lies in the fact that much that at least goes by the name of mysticism seems to be artificial, and may be produced by purely mechanical processes. Much in it, too, is trivial and insignificant, even in the case of the great mystics of history, like St. Theresa and, again, Madame Guyon: not positively erroneous and misleading, but merely unimportant. Every worth-while process

has its dangers; and the more delicate the process, the more mischievous is any error. The mystic must be on his guard.

§ iii

But all mystical experience is not of the extreme type which we see in the great mystics. The mysticism which appeals so generally to men and women today is not of this high and somewhat extravagant character. It may truly be said that all religious life is mystical in its roots: i.e. it springs, originally, from direct contact with the spiritual, the immediate consciousness of God. It is a truism to say that the great historical religions have sprung from such close contact and immediate consciousness. The theory which most persons apparently share is that the great religions of the race originated in this way; and that the disciples and later followers of the Prophets and Founders of religion mark receding stages down and away from the heights of revelation and intuition, until inspiration is crystallized in theology, and the fresh, vivid consciousness of God and eternal life is buried under a mass of dogma and ecclesiasticism. But this theory is not quite true to fact. The great religions have one and all, it is true, passed through various successive stages of development, but not always in a downward direction, by degeneration or disintegration. Certainly it is not true of Christianity. There exists in it a power of survival—or of revival—which maintains it at a level of vitality and vigor quite damaging to the theory of decadence. There are periods when religion lags behind social and intellectual development. This is to be expected, considering its conservative nature, and the fact that it deals with needs and aspirations of the human spirit which are fairly permanent and continue the same from age to age. And in decadent ages, the Church has seemed on the very verge of dissolution. In the eighteenth century,

even its leaders prepared to abandon the Church, as sailors abandon a doomed ship. But the nineteenth century saw a revival of religion which would have made Voltaire and the French *illuminati* rub their eyes in amazement. It was so three centuries earlier; it was so in the middle ages; it was so at the close of the Graeco-Roman period.

It would be strange indeed if religion were to survive only on the crusts and crumbs of spiritual feasts in earlier ages, maintained solely by the ponderous momentum of ecclesiasticism. And religious men themselves deny that anything of the sort takes place. The heavens are opened—to remain open. The Spirit descends—to abide with the faithful. The golden age is not far-off in the distant past, nor in the remote and undiscovered future: it has begun, it is here, and the future brings only its more perfect realization. This was the burden of Jesus' teaching and of the earliest Christian Gospel. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"—the Kingdom is to come, but it is also here already: and men may henceforth enter it and receive it in possession.

But how does it fare with men a hundred years later, or a thousand, or nineteen hundred? Is heaven still open, is the Spirit still descending?

If Christian history means anything, it means that the way of access opened up by Jesus has never since been closed. Only a superficial view of the phenomena of religion can lead a man to ignore the vitality of Christian faith centuries after Jesus and the Apostles. It was not theology or ecclesiasticism which inspired St. Francis and Savonarola and the Wesleys and William Law and Bishop Wilson and Keble and Father Damien and ten thousand more, the heroes and missionaries of the Christian faith in these latter centuries. Time would fail to speak of them all. And while each owed a debt to the ecclesiastical organization, while each bore the mark and wore the crest of some one particular theology, it is

undeniable that the spirit of life in Christ Jesus dwelt and wrought in them. The selfsame Spirit which was manifested in Christ is to be found in them. And an immediacy of access, thus made possible, a direct and fresh consciousness of God, inspired their lives of self-devotion and consecration. Let it be remembered that religious history includes such phenomena as well as those of warring theologies and dismembering sects. And the real continuity of the Christian faith is to be found not in the linking together of theology after theology, or even of successive ecclesiastical organizations; it is found in the undiminished vigor which animates Christian practice, the still-open way of access to the Father, the abiding presence of the One Spirit.

It is the feeling after this great Reality back of the varied phenomena of religion which constitutes the mysticism of today. Men are not anxious to demolish Christian institutions or to smash up the inherited systems of Christian doctrine, so much as they are anxious to come into vital contact with the Reality back of them all. It cannot be so hard to be a Christian as our fathers led us to suppose. If God is not far from each one of us, we surely can find Him if we try. God must be willing to recognize the disabilities under which men now labor: the complicated and bewildering world in which we find ourselves, the habit of intense rationality which we have had to acquire in order to make headway at all in the face of the competition for survival which nature forces upon us. We were not brought up in the ages of faith. We were not nurtured in a humility of acquiescence to the Authority of an infallible Institution. Surely, God reckons with all that, and will help us to find ourselves and Him when we realize that we are otherwise lost, and that about us are only trackless wastes, meaningless mazes of experience, struggle, speculation. We cry out for the One Thing Real in the midst of insecurity and delusion, and we are sure the Real will somehow appear.

Such moods overtake all of us, some time or other. For those to whom they have become habitual and the settled environment of the soul, mysticism offers the one way out, the sole possible solution. Whether this takes the form of conversion and affiliation with some religious organization, or remains the secret possession of the solitary, it can be nothing less than the actual discovery of God, the Real, if it is to be satisfying. And whether it take the one form or the other, it is essentially mystical: just as the rain falls upon the earth, and a part gathers together into streams and rivers, driving the mills and bearing the commerce of mankind; while part moistens the roots and leaves of individual corn- and wheat-stalks, entering secretly and without further communication into the life and structure of each plant—this too is useful, and the function of rain! The source of the religious life, and its essence, is one, whether in mysticism or in ordinary vital religion.

Can God then be known directly, and without the mediation of any religious system? Is there any knowledge of Him possible which transcends the methods of tuition, of learning from another?—Certainly there is such knowledge. The very fact that Christ and the Prophets have appeared is sufficient proof and guarantee of this: without it, historical religion would be impossible. And for each and every one of us, since we are made in the image of God; since also, as the old theology itself assures us, the Logos indwells every human soul —God may be known directly. That is what the highest religion is: "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." It was to safeguard this truth that theology made place for the 'uncovenanted mercies' of God. The old and exclusive dictum of Cyprian: "Outside the Church there is no salvation," has ever since been explained—and explained away—by sane theologians, as signifying that no man can hold the Church in contempt and be sure of his own salvation. God assures men

certain benefits within the Church, in the worthy receiving of the Sacraments, in the practice of institutional religion: but there is no ground for saying that He denies His grace to men who for one reason or another are outside the Church, cut off from participation in its life, unable to receive its Sacraments.

How then may we discover God, until such time as we can satisfy ourselves that we have no longer a right to remain outside the Religious Institution—and let us remember, the burden of proof is on us: normal religious life is social, and ought to function institutionally—and until we have been able to work out a theology, a rational and satisfying system in our own religious thought, which shall take account of all the data of our religious consciousness? It is simple enough, but we cannot give directions. If it were not a discovery which each one must make for himself, the way might easily be told. But just as the practice of religion is conditioned by the mind and temperament, the ideas and aspirations of the individual religious man, so the way in which God shall be sought and found by each individual is somehow different from every other.

Nevertheless, there are certain steps which would seem to be obvious and inevitable. In the first place belongs the Socratic counsel, "Know yourself." There may be mystics who would scorn such a beginning. But it is not a final rule; it is only the first. We ought to examine ourselves by the light of what we innately or intuitively know to be good and true; or failing this, by what we recognize as good and true in other persons, preeminently in such saints as we know and reverence, and in Christ. We should carefully distinguish between our motives, marking out such as are in the least false or artificial or bad. These must be rooted out, as far as we are able. And this must take place at the beginning—a mystical life which is not moral, or which pretends to itself

to be above and beyond the realm of good and evil, is simply misguided and leads nowhere.

The first step in the way is self-knowledge, and the second is self-purification. For the true preparation for mystical experience is moral, not intellectual. Many have found this to be true only after a vain search for spiritual experience in a purely intellectual way, through speculation or the cultivation of certain purely mental states. In the words of Raphael Aben-Ezra to Hypatia, in Kingsley's novel, they confess: "What if I had discovered that the spiritual is not the intellectual, but the moral; and that the spiritual world is not, as we used to make it, a world of our own intellectual abstractions, or of our own physical emotions, religious or other, but a world of righteous and unrighteous persons?" [6] Or in words much older, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, but he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, that hath not lifted up his hands unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbor? He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Psalm xxiv. 3-5). "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Whosoever will come to God must "purify himself, even as He is pure." The testimony of those who have gone before us must not be disregarded. "I said unto the Lord, 'Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me'; and He said, 'I will: be thou cleansed. But first go unto the pool which is by interpretation, Sent, and there wash yourself, and make you clean.' And so I went, even as the Lord commanded me. And in obedience to the commandment, as I was sent, I began to wash. Then was I made clean, even as the Lord had said." Whoever disregards this plain and primary requirement, cannot hope to advance far on the mystic way.

> Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
> And furnished for so great a Guest.

But beyond this second elementary stage there is a still higher. It is a stage which cannot be reached save by self-knowledge and self-purification; but once these are attained, the way opens up naturally to the higher—and one may even catch glimpses of the higher way as he begins to advance along the lower. For if a man will really know himself and earnestly undertake to purify himself, he will find the need for a Higher Power. The house is 'swept and garnished,' but it has no occupant as yet. And unless it is occupied, the dust accumulates once more, the garnishings fade, and it falls into disrepair; "and the last state of that man is worse than the first." And he will find also that it is impossible thoroughly to cleanse his house unless God sweeps with him. There is need for a Power not-ourselves, greater than ourselves, to make our purification thorough and permanent. It is then that we find something of our own very *self* standing in the way and hindering us. We must get out of the way—*we* must stand aside, as a child stands aside for his father to open the gate before him. We must be saved from ourselves, in spite of ourselves. And part of our own nature, as we have said before now, may need to be let go. We must save what we can—but we now have no sense of the need to save much of it. It is not our *self* which needs to be saved, but something higher than self; which is yet—paradox enough! —more truly *we* than the self we let go! Here a man comes to realize his Higher Self. He becomes identified with it; its interests are now his interests; its salvation is his salvation; its purity is his purity; its freedom is his, and its power and purpose and desires. Many have told us of the joy which comes with the realization of a self higher than the old self, of the sense of liberation which accompanies their release from the ambitions and vices and habits of the old self, of their abounding happiness and lightness of heart. They are free from care; for the Higher Self has strength and wisdom

to meet all the distressing situations of life, and they lean—or their Higher Self leans—back upon the Everlasting Arms.

Is this Higher Self still human, or is it divine? Is it still the man himself, or is it God?—The answer has been both Yes and No. For it appears that at this spiritual altitude, the distinctions of I and Thou vanish. 'I' do this or that; but no, it is God in me. God wills so and so; but there is no crossing of purposes between my Higher Self, as there once was between my lower self and God; and as God wills, so 'I,' in God, likewise will. 'I' am poured out, that God may fill me, and be all in all; nevertheless, it is in some sense 'I' whom He fills. God is no longer outside me, nor I outside God; we are one—yet it is *union* which has taken place, not identification: for in no true sense can I say, "I am God." This experience is in fact ineffable, and no words can possibly convey its meaning to one who has never learned it by living it.

Where then are the stages of Satisfaction, Despair, Consummation; of Purification, Illumination, and Union, of which the great mystics speak? Where is the Dark Night of the Soul of which they complain? They are all here. But it is in individual souls that some steps of the way are more difficult to take, the effort required more pronounced, the stages more prolonged, than in others. Some souls mount up lightly as with the wings of a lark; while others plod painfully over the rugged way, lost in dark ravines of the mountainside, caught in tangled thickets where the way disappears and no path has ever been trod. For some, the Dark Night is inescapable, and of terrible reality; they are encompassed with 'darkness palpable.' It is no passing shadow merely; but Light itself seems blotted out. A period of despair sets in, and God Himself, Life itself, are but a mockery and a lie. This too, of course, may take many forms: it may be only a saddening loss of faith, and not so extreme as 'the terrors of the Lord' which many 'have suffered with a troubled mind'; or it may

be like Madam Guyon's cringing under the strokes of divine wrath, when she was unable to do anything but lie on the floor and tremble. The varieties of temperament are inescapable, for they are founded on the varieties of human nature. The experience may be quite pathological; or it may be so normal as to excite no interest on the part of others, hardly on the part of the man himself. It may be accompanied by visions, trances, ecstasies; or it may not. Much—if not everything—depends upon the physical and mental constitution of the person passing through the experience.

But in its great broad outlines, it is generally true to type, and follows the course of all higher religious experience. The mystic, that is, finds God within; but He is the same God whom others, not gifted with mystical capacities, discover and worship, love and obey, in their milder and less exciting ways. And for all its secrecy, its introspectiveness, its incommunicableness, it is essentially what all men go through—minus the strong emotional upheavals—in seeking and finding God. For, as we said, all religious life is mystical in its roots.

Does this mean that the ordinary religious man is conscious of union with God, as the mystic is? Or is this a stage of religious experience reserved for the choice souls who undertake the holy quest?

*Essentially*, it is the same thing that the ordinary believer is conscious of: a life of reconciliation with God, of obedience, of unselfishness—that is, as his ideal and goal—of faith and virtue. What distinguishes the mystic is his loneliness, the intensity of his feelings, and—what results from both—the vivid, sometimes extravagant and violent, language in which he tries with more or less unsuccess to relate his ineffable experience.

If a final word may be added, it is this: True mysticism does not flourish in the arm-chair, nor is it propagated by afternoon lectures at the club. It is 'stuff o' the very stuff' of the

religious life. Nor is it cultivated, as a rule, by conscious effort. The great mystics have themselves testified that the experience has oftenest come unsought: 'While I was musing, the fire kindled.' To many it has been a grievous burden. They were the elect 'vessels of the Lord,' chosen by Him to undergo such trials as were in store for them. The self-cultivated, neurotic, self-exploiting kind of mysticism is superficial, shallow, and deadly. Unless a man is really laid hold upon by the experience, therefore, he will do well to follow the humbler path of daily duties and observances, and avoid 'rushing in where angels fear to tread.' But if his temperament, his habits of mind and of life, or his special vocation, leads him in this way, there is no escape; let him then rise to the hard heroic task which is laid upon him, beseeching the Lord for light and guidance. For His 'grace is sufficient' for all our needs, even in the midst of the extreme and dangerous hazards through which a man must journey once he embarks upon the far perilous seas of the Mystic Quest.

## CHAPTER X

# *The Church and Its Doctrines*

IT IS SOMETIMES ASKED whether or not one can be just as good a man outside the Church as in it. But this assumes as answered another question, not so frequently asked: How is a man going to get outside the Church? Here the answer is by no means obvious. It is simple enough to say that a man is outside the Church when he remains unbaptized, or makes no personal profession of the Christian faith. He is enrolled in no parish register; he is not present at the services and public worship of the Church; he takes no active part in the Church's work, declines to support it in any way, and has no share in its communion and fellowship. Literally, of course, he is 'outside the Church.'

But the conditions are nevertheless not at hand for a satisfactory answer to our question. For a man can no more escape the influence of the Church than he can escape the influence, one way or another, of democracy, or of the competitive system in industry. Indeed, he can escape the latter far more easily than the former: for the Church and its influence antedate by many centuries both the democratic idea of political organization and the competitive principle in industry; and its influence has entered far more deeply into our whole life. He himself, in his own most private and secret spiritual attitudes, is moulded far more by Christianity than by democracy. For example, whether he responds to it or not, or responds in greater or less degree, the idea of God which exists in his mind is that which is furnished him by centuries on centuries

of Christian civilization. For the modern American, churchman or agnostic, the very notion which is called up in his mind by the word "God" is far more that of the Christian religion than that of the Buddhist or Mohammedan. Even if he refuses to accept the privileges and take upon himself the responsibilities of membership in the Church, he thinks of the Church as a distinct religious organization, not as a national cult, like ancient Judaism and other religions, or as a school of religious opinion or philosophy. And his standards of moral judgment, the connotations of such words as 'good,' 'holy,' 'brotherly,' 'pure,' are more or less those of Christian teaching. This is inevitable; for all modern language bears the marks of the age-long influence of Christian ideas. Language, the system of symbols for ideas, without which no one can exchange or even possess ideas—as philosophers have pointed out—and by the very use of which a man is compelled to deal in the ideas symbolized—language is a slow development out of the past. And among all the influences which have shaped our language, the influences which may be called religious have been almost exclusively those of the Christian Church. To think religiously at all, for most of us, is, therefore, to think in the terms of the Christian religion. This subtle and unconscious influence is one not often recognized, though it affects us all every day.

To get really outside the Church, or the sphere of the Church's influence—and this is what is implied by our question—it would be necessary for a man to migrate to some desert island, or isolated region of the earth, populate it, and there found a civilization from which should be excluded all traces of the Christian religion and every influence of the Christian Church. No such experiment has yet been made, so far as we know, on sufficiently large a scale, and with so exclusive a purpose, as to satisfy our requirements. (Even Russia is still largely Christian, under its Communist veneer,

as we have now begun to discover.) Here and here only could it be satisfactorily demonstrated that a man may be just as good outside as within the Church. While he remains a member of Christian society, society, that is, which is considerably permeated by Christian ideas and practices, he is in no position to say whether or not he could be as good outside the Church; for the Church influences society, and moulds the individual in more subtle ways than he can enumerate; it envelops him, like the atmosphere; it contributes to the environment of his earliest and formative years; and he cannot escape it. Therefore the question is purely hypothetical and cannot be answered by anything but a guess. For no man is sufficiently removed from the Church—no man in modern Christian society, whether he responds fully or partially, positively or even negatively to its influence—to supply the requisite evidence.

But why should anyone wish to be good *outside* the Church? Why, for one thing, should he go on speaking in terms of 'good' and 'bad' when it is the Church which has given those words the content and value which he himself assigns to them? And, for another, if he desires to be good, why should he not assume that membership in the Church and identification with its purposes and aims will help him to become good and to remain good, and even to grow better than he is? The *onus probandi* surely rests upon the shoulders of the man who is anxious not to belong to the Church. Normally, every good man in modern society—unless born into some other religion—ought to be a Christian, and a member of the Church. There ought to be no more question of his decision to enter the Church than of his decision to be a citizen of the nation into which he was born. The custom of permitting children to come to years of discretion before urging them to become Christians and Church-members is as unreasonable as it would be to let them choose their nationality at that age; or rather,

to refuse them citizenship until 'they come of age and can answer for themselves.' The most natural assumption in the world ought to be that a boy or girl is to grow up in the Church, even as he or she grows up in America, under the influences of the spiritual, political and social ideals which both represent.

But the objection is urged, This lowers the standards of the Church. Does it then lower the standards—the sacred standards—of our national institution to admit children to citizenship by virtue of their American birth? We want a broader view of the religious life; we ought to *expect* men and women to be religious and Christian, even as we expect them, without any previous consultation, to be Americans, loyal patriots, decent citizens. Every person should be assumed innocent of intent to be pagan and selfish and the servant of Antichrist until he has freely avowed his preference, even as we assume his innocence of crime until proved guilty. It is unfortunate that we often expect persons to be just what they ought not to be! And, conversely, do not expect them to be what they ought! The Church is no coterie of elect, no society for mutual edification; it is the Body of Christ, the Church of the living God, the natural Home of goodness and purity and unselfishness and of all that is noble and true in human nature —virtues which every good man, every good citizen, aspires to attain.

"But that is all very well as an ideal," someone says: "as a fact, the Church falls far short of this; it has made itself an exclusive, narrow society of very good people, or would-be good people, with rigid requirements for membership; and, so far has the exclusive principle actually gone, it has split up into innumerable dissenting and quarreling sects." This objection had considerable validity in the past, we admit, even to within the memory of men now living. But he must be somewhat of a provincial who fails to recognize the healing

of the breaches which is taking place in the Church today, and the filling-up of that which lacked. On every hand are signs that the Church is becoming outwardly as well as inwardly one again. The old Protestant intolerance, the ancient emphasis on individual variations and peculiarities of doctrine and custom, is dying out. The Church is not becoming indifferent to essential doctrines; but the Church is ceasing to be indifferent to essential tasks. The social enthusiasm of today, the missionary enterprise, the wide view of the Church's real *work* in the world, has relieved the one-sided emphasis on purely theoretical matters, like predestination or supra- and sublapsarianism, or the precise mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. In a generation or two, we who are then alive shall see, God haste the day, a transformation wrought in the outward manifestation of the Church's life: a unity recovered which has been broken for centuries; an essential harmony, allowing for individual variations of preference or temperament, a free and tolerant Catholicism which shall be as much better than the intolerant and politically enslaved Catholicism of a certain period in the 'ancient and undivided' Church, as modern democracy is superior to that of the early city-states. If a man 'hath an ear to hear'; if he is able to catch the still-faint rustlings in the tops of the mulberry trees, as the Spirit of the Lord begins to sweep in vital renewal across the face of society and of the Church; if his imagination or his vision can picture for him even the next stage in world-development and in the expansion of the Church, he will no longer be able to resist his impulse to share in it, to have some personal part in God's vast work.

A soldier is proud to wear the insignia of his division, known for its heroism and achievements, as he marches with it in triumph after the victory; the imagination of a young man is fired by the magnitude of operations effected by the immense commercial corporation in which he is employed; and

does not a similar pride and enthusiasm thrill the heart of one who sees how things are going today in the moral and spiritual world, the achievements, the operations about to be accomplished, and who is aware of his own part in the vast 'working of God,' as the world-task gets continually better done? For a man of vision, for a man with high purpose and breadth of mind, the fascination of the Church's future—not to mention its past—is simply irresistible! He has no longing to get out of the Church, to be a good man by himself, with no social contacts and sympathies of a religious character; he has no other desire but to get *into* the Church as much as he can—as far in as he can possibly get!—and to throw every ounce of strength he can muster, every item of influence he is able to exert, into the realization and achievement of the Church's purpose.

§ i

There has grown up, especially since the sixteenth century, a false theory that the genuineness and integrity, or 'Catholicity,' of the Church are necessarily marked by uniformity in worship and religious opinions. This is true of Rome, the uniformity of whose worship has been brought about chiefly in this period; it is true also in some degree of Anglicanism, and of the Protestant churches generally. On this principle, intolerance is the most natural outcome of intense religious conviction. Hence persecution has been the penalty for holding beliefs contrary to those generally received. Hence intolerance has been defended as just and right, and the measures taken to secure uniformity, no matter how oppressive or even cruel, found here their justification. The Holy Inquisition burned men's bodies to save their souls; the pure theocracy of the Massachusetts Bay colony was jeopardized by the presence of dissenters from strict Puritanism, and

they were driven out. We do not mean that persecution began in the sixteenth century; but a renewed application of an ancient principle was then made, which wrought havoc within the Church. The earlier persecutions were more generally political in motive, masked under a religious excuse. But the sixteenth century saw the principle, "Whatever is the religion of the State, that is to be the religion of all the people in the State," brought into the very heart of Christian fellowship. The religion of the Prince must be the religion of the populace. Loyalty to the Christian faith was made identical with conformity to the established and constituted form of that faith, supposed, by the community professing it, to be the only true faith.

With whatever of loss and gain the succeeding centuries have advanced, this principle has now certainly fallen into general desuetude, and its final repudiation is only a matter of time. Surely this is one meaning of the great religious upheavals in contemporary Russia, Italy, and Spain. But the non-political form in which the theory persists, since State-religion is now almost wholly antiquated and survives only in particular communities of religious people, is still to be reckoned with. We agree with Matthew Arnold that 'separation for opinion's sake' was the fundamental heresy of the Puritans; though, given the conditions in which they found themselves, and the exclusive view of religion which all men generally shared at the time, it is easy to see how natural was such a separation. But a similar latent schism still survives wherever true religion is identified with ability to say *Shibboleth* correctly. The ordinary man is unable to understand such a condition. It is historical, but not vital. He can understand it in the past, if he studies the past; he cannot understand it today. Why Catholicity should not denote tolerance, comprehensiveness, freedom—as involved in its ancient and most essential significance—he has great difficulty in seeing. He can

understand variation: the world about him is full of it; nature is full of it; human life develops in the same way, by ceaseless variation, and progress is evolution. But what he cannot comprehend is any attempt, made in the name of religion, to destroy this principle of life, and introduce a strait-jacket of uniformity as the guiding principle. He longs for a religious life which shall be free, and shall allow for variety and even divergence without destroying the fullness of faith:—that very fullness itself seems to demand room for variation. And so he thinks, with Abraham Lincoln, that 'his church hasn't yet been founded.'

But the Church is steadily growing more tolerant and comprehensive. Religious men are learning the lesson of freedom. The Church is viewing its function more socially and objectively every day. The old distinction between the Visible and the Invisible Church is passing away. It was required in the past by the political situation, in which the State had in many cases prostituted the Church to its own ends. To live a free and autonomous religious life, it was often necessary to imagine the true Church as invisible, above, distinct from the corrupt visible Church; thus a man might belong to the true Church, which was invisible, and not to the visible organization on earth. But the Church is no longer the creature of the State, enchained and powerless to do other than its political master's bidding. A new day has dawned, and a greater future faces the Church than even the most glorious ages of the past could more than faintly foreshadow.

Another fundamental heresy which has wrought vast havoc in the past, though it never produced a sect—and for very good reason—is the identification of the Church with the clergy. It has never produced a sect, chiefly because it is a heresy of laymen and not of clerics, and a heresy of practice more often than of belief! None of us is free from it, even today. The work of the Church is left to the ordained officers

of the Church; the layman all too often resigns the duties which devolve upon every person as a Christian, to the parish minister or priest: 'that is his business; he has time for it, but I have not.' It is a heresy of practice, but its fruits are apparent in the weak faith and the spiritual barrenness of many parishes in the land. It represents the insidious recrudescence of priestcraft in our midst; it lays the foundation for a spiritual clericalism, equally as deadly as the political kind. And it is wholly false to the ideal of the Christian Church. For the Church *is* the laity, in which certain members are called to function pastorally, or priestly, or prophetically: They function for the Church and as the Church; they are *the Church functioning in its particular members.* But it is the Church as a whole which acts through them, it is the Spirit within the Church using them for His purposes. The clergy are simply the laity, or members of the laity, who have been given specialized functions and the grace of a divine calling and ordination to fulfill such functions. Even the Catholic theology recognizes the principle in 'the priesthood of the laity.' In the symbolism of the New Testament, it is the body which sees, through the eye; the body which operates, through the hand. The Church is still the people. Therefore all pastoral work, all evangelistic work, all sacramental ministrations ought to be shared by the 'laity'—who are the Church! The work of the ministry cannot be done *for* the Church, in place of the Church, by its clergy: ministry is the task of the Church itself. The minister acts in the name of the Church: but only as he represents the Church itself, as he gathers up and leads the ministry of the Church, either to its own dependents within the family or fold, or to those without and suffering need.

The Church of today is experiencing a renewal of the democratic spirit: we say 'renewal,' for this was the spirit of its earliest days, and of scattered days throughout its history.

The Church of the future will be still more democratic. But democracy will not mean the disorganization and abandonment of the ministry, any more than in political life it means disorganization of the State: it will mean the conscious adoption of the attitude of ministry on the part of the whole body of faithful men, and a closer-knit relationship between those who function exclusively in a ministerial way and those whose fellows and representatives they are in the Body of Christ.

§ ii

Religion dies if it becomes self-centred. It lives only by constant expansion and self-giving. If it is vital at the heart, its life-blood flows out to the whole periphery of life. Hence the missionary activity of the Church is an irrefutable criterion of its vitality. But more than this: it must encourage sympathy with others. If the Church exists to answer certain human needs, and if it creates or stimulates those needs only because their satisfaction brings a more abundant life to men, it cannot fail to see the variety and complexity of these needs. Here we come to see the point of view of the thoroughly modern man who still believes in the Church: for the need of the world is more apparent today than it was heretofore, even twenty years ago. We know more about our fellow-men. We have come to understand their aims and aspirations to a greater degree. We see why it is that certain men find satisfaction in cults which once branded their adherents as queer and 'alien from the human race.' We see more than blind superstition even in sun-worship. We know more of foreign religions, and of the religions of ancient times. We have come to realize that what once we supposed only alienated men from the common feelings of the race really identify them more closely with the race. A profound sympathy with our own species has resulted. Whatever is human is now no

longer alien to us: and we have discovered that 'human' covers vastly more than our fathers imagined. Moreover, since human nature is social, and human development is impossible in isolation, so likewise our religion must be social; it cannot develop in isolation. Here is the key-note which we believe we have found of the religion of the future: if anything, it must be social. But such a term may be vague and indefinite, as the future itself is vague and indefinite. Let us say that the religion of *today* must be social; and then let us attach some meaning to the word social.

*It must be social in doctrine.* If Christianity is to recognize and satisfy the most diverse forms of religious aspiration, it must be social or, in older language, Catholic in principle. Here we face the problem of Christianity as the world-religion. There are indications, of which we have already spoken, that the world is rapidly becoming a unit. Humanity is essentially one: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth." This makes possible the extension of world-commerce, world-communication, world-industry; it also makes possible world-religion. The latter will in fact be the more easily accomplished as culture becomes universal; just as the old Graeco-Roman civilization, with its good roads, its system of justice, its easy transportation and travel made possible the rapid spread of Christianity in the earlier centuries, before the Empire fell. But shall it be Christianity, or some other religion, which is to arise as the world-religion?

We already know enough of the various religions of mankind to recognize certain traits and characteristics which are not peculiar to any one of them, but common to all, or certainly to a considerable number. The apparently innumerable faiths of men resolve themselves into a few classic types. As Troeltsch said, "It is indeed surprising on how few ideas humanity has had to live." [1] Two or three fundamental types

seem to be permanent in religious history: the ethical, which is often legalistic; and the redemptive, which is often ascetical. One stresses the purity of heart and hand which man must achieve more or less for himself, in order to satisfy the requirements of the highest law; the other, the divine grace or power which lifts man above himself, his sins, weaknesses, and mortality—divine love offers him what he could never in the world win for himself, eternal life. Either type of religion may be institutional; both in fact commonly are; but for the latter, an institution is wholly necessary. The great institutional religions have commonly been redemptive in character.

Christianity arose in a land which stands midway between East and West, a land which the Rabbis fondly held was the very heart of the earth. It is significant that Christianity progressed both eastward and westward; that men came to it from religions both redemptive and ethical; that throughout its history both these basic notes have marked it. Some of its theological controversies, like the Pelagian, grew out of this very two-sidedness of its faith. And the combination which characterized it at the beginning has persisted to the present.

One of the greatest miracles in religious history is the transition from the pure spiritual and ethical idealism of Jesus' teaching, with its minimum of presupposed institutionalism, to the great Catholic Church of his followers, with its rites and sacraments, ceremonies, rules, and world-wide organization. "Nothing is more natural than this," it may be said. But it is often stated to the disadvantage of existing institutional Christianity—as if, for example, Christianity experienced a 'Second Fall' in the days of Gallienus and Constantine. We prefer to look upon this transition, which marked the genesis of historical Christianity, as one of the most beneficent, perhaps the most beneficent, in the history of mankind, and not as the fatal contradiction to the spirit of Jesus which many persons assume that it was. The combination of the

ethical religion of Christ with the pagan religion of antiquity, with all its externalism of rites and organization, was somewhat like the implanting of intelligence in the higher anthropoids, of reason and the moral sense where before had been only blind instinct, hunger, desire: however 'emergent,' a creative act of God.

For, (*a*) all historical religions have been institutional. Non-institutional Christianity would have perished quite as speedily as a non-institutional Buddhism or Islam. Since man began to worship, to offer sacrifice, and to inquire after God, religion has been institutional. But, (*b*) the religion of Jesus was not institutional, at least not prominently so. This was because his parousia or return, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, were daily expected by his followers; and because his own personal relation to God was the heart of the religion of the Gospel: it was essentially personal. However, (*c*) in Christianity we see the welding of the pure ethical and spiritual idealism of the Gospel with the coarse institutionalism and machinery which religion, historically, always drags along with it. This is the greatness of Christianity: the sublime personal religion of the Gospel set in the heart of the crude institutional and 'sacerdotal' religion of humanity generally. It is a further incarnation of the already Incarnate: 'The Word was made flesh' when the Son took upon himself our humanity at his appearing in the world. But here his very spirit takes unto and upon itself the vesture and burden—not of human flesh, but—of the religions and cults of all pagan, God-inquiring humanity. Thus the spirit of the Gospel lives on within the framework of the religions of antiquity, and the Church, as Anglican theologians have described it, is 'the extension of the Incarnation.' Thus the Gospel is preserved; and the hull of paganism is brought to life and regenerated. Like leaven in the meal, it spreads until the whole be leavened—and become itself a further leaven!

It is useless to claim victories for Christ, throughout Christian social history, and decry the institutionalizing of Christianity in the first and second centuries. The one was impossible without the other. Here is the miracle of Christianity: continuity with the past, not only with the past of Judaism but with pagan Greek and Roman antiquity, and all the world; and at the same time a continual process of regeneration, due to the infusion of the spirit of the Gospel. If anyone questions the value of this 'institutionalizing' of Christianity, let him reflect upon what would in all probability have happened to the Christian religion at the Fall of Jerusalem; or at the Fall of Rome, with the untutored pagan tribes of the North sweeping down upon a decadent Mediterranean civilization; or at the time of the Moorish aggression!

But the demand for a religious institution is only one demand of the human heart; and it is only one of the demands which Christianity has met in the past. And if Christianity has already satisfied the primary conditions of a world-religion, it must press on now to satisfy them all. The process of institutionalizing Christianity, in the early centuries, was surely no greater than the task before the Church today, to go out of its way, to become all things to all men, that it may gain them for Christ; and if the Church was justified in the past, it will be justified again. If Christianity is fitted to become the world-religion, if it is in fact potentially this already, then the Church, in order to represent Christianity with any adequacy, must itself become Catholic. It must be institutional; it must be one; it must allow for variety; it must encourage tolerance and freedom; it must trust in the guidance of God through all the mazes of variety which surround it, and admit freely the most diversely-minded within its fold. The Church cannot be smaller than the nation; and America (of which we are thinking now) is proverbial for its variety of life and its slowly forming unity. The Church must be

Catholic, but also free: a new kind of Catholicism must be evolved—I believe it is being evolved—one which the world has never yet seen, but which is the religious hope of mankind, a Catholicism liberal, tolerant, comprehensive and free. The movement toward Church unity, I firmly believe, is laboring in this direction.

I say, 'one which the world has never yet seen.' And yet, as near an approach to it as the world has seen was to be found in the European Christian Catholicism of the early middle ages, before the papacy and the religious orders mingled politics with their religion and in consequence nearly strangled the Church. In those earlier days there seemed a place for every sort of talent, interest, or free motion of the Spirit in the social, intellectual, philosophic, or religious spheres. But it was an imperfect Catholicism: the civilization of the time was crude; it was limited to one continent, and to less than the whole of that; in consequence this Catholicism was short-lived. What succeeded it was 'Catholic' largely in name.

But the Catholicism of the future, tolerant and free and comprehensive, though governed by one supreme and unifying principle, will, if it is actually achieved, outshine every approach to it which has been made in the past as daylight outshines dawn. But can it be achieved? And how will it be brought about? Will Christianity rise to the challenge and become in fact the world-religion, or will it step aside for some other? Inconceivable that this should happen!—But the task rests no less heavily upon us. It is the same challenge which comes to all of us, nominal Christian, or nominal non-Christian, to have a share in God's mighty working in the world!

Moreover, the religion of today must also be *social in worship*. Here again the bugbear of uniformity must be laid

at rest. It is no more natural or necessary that all men should worship alike than that they should play alike, or love alike, or work alike. Uniformity exists on the surface, and can never be more than superficial. The deeper and more fundamental religion is to human nature, the more varied will be its expression. Vitality connotes variety.

We have already noted the tendency away from externalism in religion which is observable in the worship of men during the last few centuries. It is true, there is need for a certain amount of externalism; the expression of religion requires it, and it will always be with us. But no one dreams that today it fills as large a place in religious life as it once held, in paganism, or in the Christian middle ages. And it is likewise true that there is a growing tendency toward the use of ritual in many Churches. But such ritual is harmless and symbolic; it is understood by everyone; and it is not of the essence of religion, but has to do with its expression. It is harmless because it is understood.

Yet there is noticeable also a tendency—not quite in the opposite direction, but rather transversely, as lifting the understood symbolism to a higher plane—toward sacramentalism. All Churches share it, more or less. And it is more significant than any revival of ritual. It is something of a counter-current to our older anti-ritualistic tendency; but it is more than symbolistic: it is *realistic*, in its understanding of religious reality.

In a way, it is the most daring of all attempts to reach God. It sets up certain rites, or sets off (as sacred) certain media, and invites God to communicate Himself to men in these ways. This is of course only the psychological description of the phenomena of sacramental religion. Historically, men have always believed that God Himself—or Christ himself, as the Anglican Church Catechism says—ordained the Sacraments as means of communicating Himself to men: a sacrament is

"an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, . . . as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." Moreover, still speaking historically, it is beyond doubt that men have actually experienced contact with God through sacraments. It is not the testimony of our own experience alone, but of men in all the Christian ages, and of multitudes about us. Faith receives confirmation through experience; and experience has itself then spurred on faith to greater reachings-out toward the Infinite and Eternal who is yet a personal Father to us all.

What if it should be announced that God had revealed Himself in one particular place upon earth; that there men might find Him, and come into His presence; that there beyond a shadow of doubt God actually was, and we needed not to reach through the films and shadows to grasp Him: such a hallowed spot would become at once the universal Mecca and Holy City. Men would sell all and start upon pilgrimages to the new Holy Land. Now the sacramentalist says, There *is* such a place; there are places. He has found them, where the windows of heaven are opened, where God comes to earth, where men may come into His very presence and fall before His footstool. It is undeniably religious experience, and not speculation or fancy or sentiment, which leads to sacramentalism; it is genuine contact with reality. Here God actually is found; not, as with the mystic, in inner seclusion of soul, but in something outside us, and objective. The senses are not shut off, but alert, reverent, bowing before the great mystery of God's presence and Self-communication. The sacramentalist does not say, Here *only* is God to be found; for sacraments are not limitations placed upon God's grace, but 'pledges' meant for our security, and—as all theology and experience alike teach us—they do not prevent His grace from overflowing their channels. They are like abundant rivers, rather than cisterns and wells.

A sacramental religion is preëminently and of necessity social in character. It cannot help but be so, for its objective communication with God, and communion with Him, takes place "in the great congregation," "in the midst of all His people." Such are all the sacraments of the Christian religion. There is no special privilege attached to their uses: 'high and low, rich and poor, one with another' alike share the bounty and goodness of God, and kneel side by side before Him. Nor do they confer upon the believer any special marks or privileges of which he may boast above his fellows: their consecration, their 'sacramentum,' is to service. The adherent of the pagan mysteries might rejoice in his envied station as an initiate; but the partaker in the Christian mysteries can rightly glory only in a fellowship which is open to all, and which pledges him to a life Christ-like in purity, honor, self-sacrifice for the good of others. "They bind themselves with an oath," wrote Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan, "not to commit theft, or robbery, or adultery, and not to embezzle property entrusted to them." Their sacrament was a badge of fellowship, with one another and with God; and it was an oath of service in righteousness and virtue.

It is the work of the organized Church to combat and conquer evil, to bring human life under the control of the consciousness of God, to bring 'every thought and word and deed to the obedience of Christ.' Hence the 'teaching of the faith' is not an end in itself; or the 'preaching of the Gospel,' or the 'witness to the truth,' or the 'administration of the sacraments.' All these definitions of the Church's work are true, but it is more than these. For the Church must take all life in its grasp, and bring it into the light of Life. The definition of the Church set forth by the old English theologian, Richard Hooker, as 'the extension of the Incarnation,' is true: and the object of the Incarnation was more than the preaching of a Gospel, which any prophet might have delivered;

more than the institution and administration of certain sacraments, which might conceivably have been entrusted to one of the ancient priesthoods, of which the world was full. What the Church, as the extension of the Incarnation, stands for, is what the Word and Sacraments themselves deal with, convey, and are intended to effect as a means: Life, Righteousness, Salvation. And these must be applied to the whole of life, or the Church has not finished its task. This is therefore a social task: it takes for its field the whole world, and all of human life.

§ iii

No man can be of much religious service to his fellows unless he finds himself in an atmosphere and under the influence of an ideal which really takes hold of him, and to which he gives his whole-hearted devotion. His work is hopeless without enthusiasm. The Spirit of Jesus must enter and control a man, and impel him on with the very motives which impelled his Master. Religion is not doctrine; the Church is not a school of thought, nor a mechanical system which will run itself if only 'men and money' are supplied in sufficient numbers and quantity. Religion is life; and life finds its way out into expression in manifold ways; through the intellect, as doctrine; through custom and rite, and all the practices of faith. Hence doctrine must be formulated, and rite prescribed or adopted, which shall take sufficient account of actual inner life and experience to free the spirit and release its energies: it cannot be accomplished through once-cast and forever molded forms of expression. Faith comes before The Faith. Adoration and thanksgiving come before the Eucharist. Repentance precedes the baptismal washing of regeneration. The Spirit abides; His manifestations vary. Continual development is the condition of continuity, for the Church as for every

other institution; it is the law of all existence as we know it. And yet the Church is old, very old; and her antiquity is a precious heritage. Her customs are ancient, and her rule of faith; her creeds, her books, her prayers, her sacraments. Can a man find in the Church the atmosphere and the influence which will rouse his enthusiasm, fill him with fresh energy? Or is its energy, its life, though manifested through continually reformulated doctrine and slowly changing custom, nevertheless so slow a process that its freshness is altogether worn off by the time development to meet new needs has been accomplished? In a word, is the Church up to date?

We Americans do not appreciate antiquity as many other peoples do. Even our greatest and longest founded institutions suffer the vicissitudes of the Rich Man's barns in the parable of Jesus: "I will tear down and build greater!" Antiquity alone does not appeal to us; it is an insufficient recommendation for any institution. But the Church has more than antiquity to recommend it. Its years must have taught it wisdom, if it is to guide men through the chaos which lies on either hand of civilization. And such indeed have they taught it. Its literature is the choice treasure of centuries on centuries of vital spiritual life. Its worship, its liturgies, its sacraments are such as saints were reared upon. Its organization, today so various and of such conflicting types, represents the variety of human temperaments to which Christianity has appealed, and of spiritual needs which it has satisfied. Its music, its hymns, its art; its books of devotion; its splendid, undismayed, and ever-renewed attempts at a final theology and religious explanation of existence; its churches, its schools, its outward glory and its inward charm give a value to its antiquity which serves in some measure to explain the love and devotion of its children.

There are those who disapprove of such devotion to the Institution, fearing that it hinders devotion to Christ, and

obscures the spiritual and unworldly character of the Institution's own ideal. It is only too true that this is a real danger. But it is a danger, if we read the history of the past aright, which chiefly faces men who are determined to use the Institution for their own ends, or who do so use it more or less unconsciously: not the men to whom the Church is the Beloved Community, the heavenly City, the new Jerusalem which is from above, the Mother of us all, a city of light, ancient but still in its prime, and facing the future with all the undiminished vigor of eternal youth. The danger exists when men's hearts have grown cold and their ideals have sagged to earth.

In spite of the wavering of individuals and the continual strife of tongues, in spite of the varying size of its membership and its changing outward condition, it is undoubtedly the great Religious Institution of our race. It comes down from the ancient past with the slow and reverend tread of many years, with the halo of antiquity about its brow. And even in our day, as in the past, it stands for values which are not supplied by any other institution; and which may be briefly summarized in the Kantian triad: God, Freedom, Immortality. These are the greatest possible values for human life. Without them, life itself loses meaning and value. If the Church were to pass out of existence, the ensuing depression would be incalculable. Persons who now rarely enter a church would become aware of the loss which they and our whole world had suffered.

If it were necessary to choose between the Church and our popular education, for example—we should abhor the necessity of such a choice—there is no question as to which contributes the greater value to life. We say this, perfectly aware of faults in the administration of the Church; the handicaps under which it labors at the present time; the mismanagement and duplication and inefficiency of which we are trying

to be rid. For it is far more important that a child should know that he is immortal, that God is his Father, that he has a choice in life and that between a good choice and a bad one there is all the difference in the world—than that he should learn to spell more or less accurately, to read a few books, newspapers and magazines, to use figures, and acquire the knowledge which passes for 'education' with the overwhelming majority of modern youth. It is not knowledge, scientific progress, art, literature, or philosophy, which gives the highest value to human life, and discloses the secret of successful living: on the contrary it is the spiritual life which gives value and meaning to the earthly life, with its knowledge, art, science, and literature. Ignorance ought not to characterize religious people: for they are citizens in society and sharers in civilization as well; but neither ignorance nor knowledge qualify and condition the reality of the religious life. It is the history of religion itself which assures us of the fact. For it is religion that has either created or conserved the noblest of the arts of civilization, has founded its schools, has inspired its research.

Is the Church then 'up to date'?—It is perennially up to date, in that it stands for values in life which all men at all times need. And the existence of antiquated customs or of antiquely formulated doctrines which one finds in it has little to do with these essential treasures which it brings.

§ iv

But what is the relation of religion to the doctrines of the Church? What is the bearing upon a life controlled by the consciousness of God of the Church's doctrines and dogmas? Doctrine, or 'teaching,' implies a teacher, a school, a group of learners or believers. Dogma represents 'decreed' belief, and implies a body possessing the right to define authorita-

tively the true faith, in contradistinction to erroneous and unauthoritative definitions. Both, then, reach a man from outside, and appear to limit the freedom for growth within himself. They may even be treated as clamps and bonds forced upon the unwilling by superior authority. It is strange, but we do not think of the teaching or doctrine of a school of philosophy as bonds; or the decrees of the Supreme Court as fettering freedom! And yet a man is no more compelled nowadays to be a Christian than he is compelled to be a philosopher or a citizen. Here is an authoritative definition: but who, if he be looking for light on any subject whatsoever, does not welcome authoritative definitions? The authority he accepts or rejects for himself; but if it *is* authoritative, so much the more worth-while the definition.

However, this is only a superficial view of the bearing of dogma on religious life. We are not naked intellects in search of truth, but men of flesh and blood, tastes and passions. And dogma is more than the definite statement of certain fixed beliefs which the religious organization, the Church, authorizes and to which its members subscribe. There is an *ethos* about dogma which wins its way to the hearts of men as well as guiding their intellects. For just as dogma reflects the spirit and feeling, and the philosophy, of the age which gives expression to it, so this spirit and feeling are in corresponding degree perpetuated by the dogma: even as the pearl and the piece of coral bear in them forever the soft hues of tropical sea and sky under which they were formed; even as the Bible remains a sacred Jewish tome into whatsoever language it be translated.

Go into a Roman Catholic church. Its liturgy, its music, its creeds, its hymns, its prayers, its rites, its doctrines, are anchored and rooted, all of them, in unshakably fixed and steadfast dogma, and reflect the past: the early Latin Church, the Gregorian, the Leonine, the glorious Hildebrandine 'ages

of faith'—ages likewise of martyrdom, conquest, sacrifice, glory and heroism, but chiefly ages of prodigious faith. Here is the religious genius of the middle ages enshrined forever in an Institution: ages which justify the ardent love and enthusiastic praise of the thousands of its adherents.

Now it makes no difference that the Irish policeman on your beat, or the washerwoman who comes on Mondays, knows no Latin and less Greek; that theology is to them a world unknown; that of dogma they know no more than is stated more or less indirectly in the *Credo*, *Pater*, and *Ave*. Nevertheless, their religion is grounded and steeped in dogma, in authorized and infallible belief. And the whole outlook upon life, the whole temper of character, the essential views and deepest aspirations and most characteristic practices of such persons are moulded and shaped by the dogmas they implicitly accept and profess.—And the same is true, *similarly*, of Protestants.

More than this. Where the Church, or any other religious organization, has for any time enjoyed spiritual sovereignty in a community or nation, the whole life of the people takes its character, its stamp, from the dogmas of the Church. Examples come to mind at once: the Breton peasantry, the Italians, the English country-folk, the populace of New England two hundred years ago. Hence it is an easy conclusion to draw that all, certainly most, of us are more or less affected, in our deepest and most irrational beliefs, moods and motives, by the doctrine or dogma professed by the majority among whom we live. We absorbed the dogma in our childhood—no matter how 'emancipated' we now think ourselves to be. It created the religious, mental, and moral environment of our youth. And we cannot escape it, whether we are Unitarians or Catholics, Puritans or Calvinists, Baptists or Presbyterians. We can no more escape it or blot it out than we can escape or blot out the geography and climate of our native land. It

is the *ethos* which pervades, like the atmosphere we breathe, all our conscious and unconscious life. And dogma, of some sort and in some degree, certainly entered into this *ethos*, and made it what it is.

A second conclusion, which follows from this, is likewise easily drawn: that the indirect influence of dogma is even more powerful than the direct. The dogmas, the profound and fundamental convictions which go to shape our lives; the decreed beliefs set forth by a social-religious authority upon which these convictions of ours rest; the dogmas which we unconsciously absorb and our minds soak up in childhood, affect us far more profoundly throughout our lives than the statements of belief to which we subscribe in maturity, creed or covenant or catechism or articles or principles of fellowship—what not.

The recognition of this fact ought to be sufficient to settle the current falsehood that 'it makes no difference what you believe, so long as you lead a good life.' It may not always be stated as bluntly as this, but in one form or another it appears to be held quite generally today. The point of view which it represents ignores the fact that our actions—'leading a good life' or a bad one—spring from our reactions to event and circumstance in daily life, and are chiefly conditioned by attitudes of which we are scarcely conscious. These are the result of years of growth; silently, unknown, they have been forming in us since childhood. And if our religious creed, the dogmatic element in our spiritual life, is cast in one mold rather than another, develops in one environment rather than another, we are bound, if we are earnest and sincere men, to be affected thereby. Now it may not be true that every individual Calvinist will take life more seriously just because his destiny is the subject of eternal decrees; or that the individual Catholic will take his less seriously because he looks forward to a more facile reconciliation with God, and a Purgatory where his

faults will be wiped out and his shortcomings made up. Nevertheless, dogma is a social quantity; and by the profession thereof a person helps to create a certain view of the world, of God, and of life, which is destined to enter into the formation of the mind and character of his children and his children's children. Conversion from one religious body to another rarely alters the fundamental spiritual outlook of an adult. He bears the impress of his childhood's religion all his life. And although we may be quite ready to admit the truth of such a statement, 'It makes no difference what I believe, so long as I live a good life'; yet we are duty-bound to add, as forcibly as possible, "It makes no difference to you: but it makes a real difference to the world!" A man may live a good life because his neighbors live good lives, even though he professes atheism or snake-worship himself; nevertheless atheism and snake-worship are deleterious in their social effects, in the moral atmosphere which they induce, and in their influence upon his own and his neighbors' children.

And if this be true of a bad dogma—for a dogma may be bad as well as false—what shall we not expect from good dogma: from dogma that is wholesome and true, and inspires conviction and assurance upon the very deepest issues of human life? We are not arguing for the truth of this or that dogma; or for its wholesome influence upon society: but we insist that dogma is necessary, on principle—in fact inevitable—and that it is better to have true dogma than false; inspiring dogma rather than depressing; morally good rather than morally bad. For dogma runs through all religion, early and late, low and high, and pervades the most secret chambers of the religious soul.

It is of real importance, therefore, upon a social view of religion, that a man shall insist that the dogmas he professes, or that are maintained by the religious group to which he belongs, must be enlightened and enlightening, must be vital

and inspiring, must be in genuine contact with spiritual reality, must honestly interpret the highest moral and spiritual experience of the past and of his own vivid present, must shed actual light upon the encompassing mystery that surrounds our pathway through this world. Unless they truly function in such a way, no amount of argument will convince us of their authority or necessity; nothing remains but to give them up. Nevertheless, it has come as a great discovery to many a man of the present day that the old, traditional dogmas of the Christian faith, understood in a modern way, and interpreted as the products of religious experience, do shed light on life's central mysteries, and actually prove useful guides to a deeper and richer meaning in human destiny than many a more empirical or more rational system sprung somewhat more recently out of the 'necessities' of current thought.

## CHAPTER XI

# *Religion and the Social Goal*

THAT RELIGION HAS a social value goes without saying. We have already noted the social and moral influence of ecclesiastical organization and religious dogma. But its influence spreads out into still wider circles. It affects the very structure of society, and it has something to do with the permanence or instability of social organization. We observe as a matter of historical fact that the nobler the character of a religion, the nobler is the social life of its believers. And although it is hardly to be doubted that social organization has its effect upon religion, yet the reciprocal influence of religion upon social organization is indisputable. Historically, Christianity has shared in the production of certain types of social life; and it has given them a permanence, or continuity —so that one type gave way only to a higher one succeeding —up to the present time. We may contrast with it the impotence of Greek and Roman religion, of Brahmanic theosophy and pantheism, and of stereotyped and formal Mohammedanism: their influence for social advancement cannot be compared with that of Christianity.

### § i

We are today in the midst of a social movement whose beginnings we are able to trace, but whose final developments we cannot foresee. Apparently, the movement has only well begun; and in what shape society will find itself when it is over is quite beyond our reckoning. Its beginnings are un-

doubtedly due to the influence of the Christian religion. No other religion supplied the ideal of social justice which is the goal of the movement; it arose in a Christian environment; and among its earliest leaders were men who understood it as practical Christianity and nothing more. The most 'radical' leaders of today recognize its religious origin, and eulogize Christ and early Christianity, however much out of sympathy they find themselves with the Church of today. The motto of the Russian Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is: "He that will not work, let him not eat." This was the principle St. Paul laid down for the communities of his converts, as may be read at the end of his Second Letter to the Thessalonians! (II Thess. iii. 10).

Nevertheless, Christians interested in the social movement, who believe with all their heart in social justice and the highest possible political freedom, cannot but view with alarm the tendency of many social thinkers and leaders to dispense with religion. It is not that the Russian Union of Soviet Republics refuses citizenship and suffrage to the monks and clergy, and proscribes religion as the drug of the masses (or has done so until quite recently; the present situation is not clear to the rest of the world, for lack of information). It is not that Continental European communists generally urge the clergy to 'go to work and earn a living' if they would be recognized as honest citizens; or that the 'reds' decry an endowed priesthood as the curse of capitalism carried over into religion. That is all historically and psychologically explicable enough. Given unbearable economic conditions, political tyranny and judicial injustice; given endowed and privileged churches, with religious orders exempt from toil, taxation and civic duties; given, too, the strongest possible alliance of Church and State, of Church and Capitalism, of religion and autocracy; and the revolt against institutional religion is the easiest conceivable outcome. Political and economic revolution inevitably carry with them ecclesiastical revolution, in such a case. It can be

explained, well enough; but its danger remains as great as before—danger not only to religion, but to social progress. If one result seems certain from the study of the whole recorded past of the human race, it is that humanity is incurably religious. The social philosopher ought to see this. He ought to take into consideration man as he actually is, not merely man as he may become. And there is nothing in the present situation which so darkens the outlook as the attempt to do away with religion altogether, 'for the good of humanity,' in dealing the death-blow to ecclesiastical privilege.

The danger to the Church is great enough—and the Church has brought much of its woe upon itself. It has not consistently enough endeavored to rise above the level of its times. It has without sufficient reluctance fallen into the hands of patronizing despoilers. But it is ridiculous to blame the Church when we mean the times, the despoilers, the irreligious men who have adroitly tamed its uncompromising Gospel and domesticated its powers to their service. What we needs must do is free the Church, not passionately orate against it. When we say 'the Church,' of course we mean individuals within the Church; and when we say that the Church has followed, not led, in social reconstruction, we mean that individuals within the Church have not seen the Church's opportunity or duty. But these individuals are mostly dead and departed. Fulmination is therefore doubly silly: what is needed is to rouse the Church today to seize its opportunity. In the free Protestant and democratic atmosphere of America, the Church has the greatest opportunity for growth and service which it has ever had. It enjoys no special privilege at law, at court, or under any crown. Its disunity is appalling, from the point of view of efficient service; but this is already being corrected. In another generation, the disunity of the Church may have ceased to be the glaring fault and noisy scandal which it is today. The recognition that it is a scandal is a step toward the removal of the fault. The Church will survive, because

religion is a permanent activity and function of the human soul. Men cannot for any length of time live without God. And they cannot very well lapse back to a lower religion and a poorer and weaker conception of God after once having known the God of righteousness and love whom Christianity adores. The danger for the Church, then, is not overwhelming, and it is bound not to be permanent. For religion we have no fears.

But our fears for social progress are quite real, and, we believe, well-grounded. Nothing could be more unfortunate for society than that the social passion of our day should touch only the hearts of men outside organized Christianity. It has not, in fact, left untouched the hearts of men within the Church; but the majority of the more ardent advocates of political and economic freedom seem not infrequently to be men for whom religion is—at least for the present—negligible. The whole force of religion *might* be brought to bear upon the social order; but it is not actually so brought to bear. The strongest force in human life for maintaining the ideals of men at the highest level, for supporting men through the suffering of sustained self-sacrifice, for keeping the social passion, the love of the right and of one's neighbor, pure through all temptation—the very support men need for social reconstruction—has not yet been called upon. Once it is brought to bear upon the reconstruction of the social order, the latter's success will be assured. For there is no greater potential social force in the world. A religion which consciously embraces a program of social justice is the prime political need of today. The world waits for a faith which shall go forth conquering and to conquer, like early Islam or early Christianity, with something of the enthusiasm and intransigeance of the former, but more of the passionate self-repression of the latter.

Such a religion is latent, in fact, in early Christianity: in

its documents, the New Testament; in its traditions, the tales of martyrs and saints; in its organization, before the days of the Imperial Church under Constantine and his successors. Such a religion, pure and undefiled before God and men, with an uncompromising demand for service, for actual toil, for the production of worthy fruit to show for one's toil, for every man's proving that he is worth his salt: such a religion, conscious of God and aimed at eternal life, but radiating power and vitality for this life and for the social good, would sweep all before it, as once the faith of the martyrs of Jesus conquered the world of paganism. And it is just such a religion that we find latent in primitive Christianity: latent, for even in those heroic days its full sweep and capacity was not recognized. It was no social movement which we see represented in early Christianity; it is a bad reading of history which makes of the primitive Church a vast socialist party within the Empire of Rome, and of the Gospel a program of social revolution. It was a revolt primarily religious, yet embracing an ethics which still supplies the best elements in our hope of a higher and more truly human society on earth. The early Christian looked for the end of the age, for the return of Christ from heaven, for the resurrection of all believers and the last Judgment; his own hope was set on another world in place of this one. But withal he lived such a life, or lived a life attached to such a standard, as still supplies the chief factor in our hope for this present world, the world that now is but is to be made something fitter for the children of God to live in.

§ ii

Where the revolutionary socialist, the man who walks in his dream of an equality and fraternity hitherto unrealized by men, stumbles and trips in his theory is in what he calls

'the economic interpretation of history.' The very name suggests its one-sidedness. We human beings are more than economic factors, more than items in a long process of economic change and adaptation. If we were not, what would be the sense of protest against the situation in which we find ourselves today? It is because we are consciously superior to the beasts of burden, 'the beasts that perish,' it is because we are not naturally slaves, that we complain over our lot, and set about to modify it to a degree sufficient to ensure freedom, to make justice more normal, and brotherhood natural and easy. This is left out of reckoning—this, the very raison d'être—in the interpretation of history known as the economic.

Roughly sketched, the theory is as follows: The world is self-existent. There is neither need nor room for God. This self-existent universe is gradually unfolding or evolving. Mankind, among other forms of life, is its product, as one of its manifestations. Immortality, supernatural agencies, extranatural occurrences are all irrational and impossible. Through its long experience in the past, mankind has arrived at certain conceptions of its own needs and rights. The struggle for food, for shelter, for warmth and covering has taught men these needs and rights. The law of survival led men to emphasize and value that external condition or personal prowess and skill by which they escaped disaster and annihilation. At long last, competition as the condition of survival has given place to the conception of solidarity. It is not love or unselfishness, as the tuition of some supernatural and spiritual agency, which has given men this sense of social solidarity and inspires men today to live not for themselves but for the race—or at least for their own class, which is viewed as the hope of the race. Rather, it is the slow tuition of a long and hard economic struggle; it is simply the rules of the game which men have finally mastered after countless centuries of

competition and combat. Certainly, the realization of this situation came first into the minds of a few individuals; it did not emerge at once as a semi-conscious feeling on the part of the race as a whole. Certain individuals felt it keenly, expressed it, taught it—and paid the penalty. Among these were Jesus and the prophets. But the slow-hearing race finally heard, and never forgot. Of course, it was not divine inspiration which first taught the prophets what they re-told to their fellowmen. It was only a more keenly sensitive nature which happened to be theirs, so that they became conscious, sooner than the rest, of the general drift of progress.—This is not the whole of the 'economic interpretation of history,' but these are the salient points, as far as they concern religion.

Now right here is where this interpretation is supposed to clash most violently with the religious interpretation. Religion, it is assumed, is purely supernaturalistic. God created the world in six days, or six periods. He laid down a code of unalterable physical and moral law. He found that men broke this law (the Fall of Man), and so had to begin educating the race to a higher kind of life, of obedience and of fitness for eternity, through a long course of revelation. Prophets were inspired to announce His plans for the future, His threats and promises, and make plain His demands and rewards. At last, He fully manifested His displeasure with men, and announced His final terms of salvation, incorporating those who accepted the terms in a visible political-ecclesiastical organization, ruled and administered by the clergy—who reap a sufficient harvest of this world's goods at the expense of the benighted and credulous believers—and endowed with supernatural powers, graces of sacraments, rights of absolution, assurances of future bliss. Such a system, the religious, being supernaturalistic, can have no interest in the good of this world—however fond of certain of its goods are the representatives of the system. The Russian argument

for clerical disfranchisement is perfectly logical, on these grounds: "You esteem the Church higher than the State, you care only for the other world and not for this: why should you wish to be a citizen here?"

Now if this is a fair representation of religion, one could hardly expect it to appeal to men with hearts fixed on freedom, on the right to live a complete and satisfying life, to taste the joys of this world to which nature gives every man the right. If this should turn out to be religion, most men, whether in the Church or out of it, would frankly prefer naturalism and agnosticism.

But we are sure this is not a fair representation of religion. At least in America and Britain, we have been free from ecclesiastical interference in politics long enough, our economic life has been for so long a time sufficiently undisturbed —for good or ill—by any ecclesiastical organization, that it is difficult to appreciate the feelings of men on the Continent of Europe, in South America and elsewhere who are today repeating, with more or less likeness, the stages of the process by which, for us, the Protestant Reformation took place four centuries ago. A tremendous complication of issues takes place when men born and bred under the political and ecclesiastical conditions which still exist, or have existed until recent date, in other nations, come to this country and undertake to effect the revolution which they ought to effect, or have just effected, in their native lands! We have had our revolution. We may not live up wholly to the ideals of our revolutionist forefathers, either in Protestant religion or in British-American democracy. But our situation is not as if no revolution had ever taken place. It is idle to speak of the corruptions of the Church in Protestant America, where the Church has to struggle for every inch of progress. It is idle to talk of capitalistic domination as inherent in our political system: what we want is not red revolution, but more democracy, more of

the thing we already have. We already have the ballot; what we want is more intelligent voters. We want more men of integrity in politics. We want the system purged, not destroyed. As Walter Page wrote in his *Letters*, "The only cure for democracy is more democracy." And we can only say to men who come here to overthrow our system of government, and along with it our religion; men whom we really pity, for we see in them the unhappy victims of that centuries-old policy of oppression and hatred which has characterized Church and State alike in eastern and southern Europe—we can only say to them, for all our sympathy and pity, "Begone! you cannot help us: for your whole understanding of life is deficient; you lack what only accumulating generations of inheritance can give you, a habit of regulated freedom, the manners and ideals of intelligent democracy; we have no use for the czarism of the proletariat; what we believe in is the aristocracy of the common man; and our religion is not a mechanism of economic repression, it is the faith which gives purpose and weight to all our ideals of justice and fairness and solidarity."

It is the feeling that Church and State alike are opposed to freedom which leads many men to adopt a purely naturalistic basis for their social creed. It is true, one cannot but admire the calm courage of men naturally religious who surrender all that is dear to them in the old religion, for the sake, as they suppose, of the highest good of the whole race, and accept this economic-naturalistic philosophy in its stead. They are convinced that religion has had its opportunity and its day; it has failed, and as there is no hope to be derived from it, so there is none to be sought for it. The man who affirms that temperamentally and by nature he is Christian, though intellectually he is in revolt, ought to have the sympathy of every earnest religious man. Surely, there is a mistake somewhere. The highest good of the individual soul and

the welfare of the race cannot really be in any such antagonism. Somehow a solution must be found: if religion is the life of the soul, then it ought not to be the death of the body, or of society, or of society's soul—viz. its genuine and highest *humanity*.

The fault is two-fold: religion is not what the socialist free-thinker supposes it to be; and naturalism is not so anti-religious as he assumes. He believes the universe to be self-existent, a manifestation of energy and nothing more (he does not ask the ultimate question, whence came this energy). The higher capacities of mankind are derived from lower forms of life; energy gradually unfolds in social solidarity, then in love, unselfishness, passion for justice, self-forgetfulness for the good of others. But is the stream to rise higher than its source? Yes, perhaps. For a fountain does that all the time, and the fountain is the source of the stream. But does he mean that the race loses contact with its creative energy, and derives these virtues and capacities in a secondary way, from experience? Is the experience necessary in order to bring out the virtues: or are they but higher manifestations of the self-same supreme energy?—the same energy, only seen in higher, though still direct, manifestations of it? If he believes that the manifestation is direct, I claim him as in some sense, at least potentially, a religious man.

The needs which the race has set out to satisfy are not all 'economic,' not all material and physical. The hunger for moral satisfaction, for righteousness, for spiritual life, for artistic expression, the religious needs of men, these are not awakened, surely, by any economic experience of the race.[1] They are rather, if you will, direct manifestations of the Supreme Energy within or behind the race: certainly just as direct as the appetite of an oyster or the shivering of a savage in the wintry blast.

And if he admits into his self-existent universe this hunger

for righteousness, this thirst for God; if his supreme energy is great enough to be not only the power back of piston-heads and flowers, but also back of that very passion for social justice (which he himself may never see achieved) and that self-forgetting love of the race which animate his own soul, then his world has somehow a God in it: only he has not yet disentangled Him from the processes by which he thinks-out its operations. The 'economic interpretation of history' and of the whole universe in general, to which he pins his faith, is sadly defective when it comes to accounting for anything beyond mere self-interest. And the pure radical, whose enthusiasm is not for himself—for he often dwells in tenements and wears shabby raiment, while his soul is on fire for utterly imponderable and ideal ends—the man himself is the most complete refutation of his creed.

§ iii

Social revolutions are frequently unsuccessful. But their failure is not always due to the violence or unwisdom of revolutionists. They more often fail because the men of talent and capacity for management, the skillful administrators, the men fitted by nature or education for directorship in business, are usually on the side of conservatism and 'capital.' This is partly natural. The 'workers'—the manual workers, that is—have too often lacked the capacity for such direction. Bolshevist Russia soon learned this; its technicians and industrial experts had to be imported from abroad, until the new generation of native technicians grew up.

What the world needs is the men of talent—and there is no denying that such men exist, or that the variations of nature produce men gifted with abilities for leadership and direction, in business, industry, government, even as in art and science—what the world needs is for the men of talent

to become thoroughly familiar with the conditions of life which surround their fellows, and to cast their strength on the side of justice and democracy. There is hope for the future in the measure that this is what such men are doing today. The talents which God or nature has given men are for use not simply in their own interest, but for the good of the social whole. A man has no more right to use his genius for organization simply to amass wealth for his own use or for the gratification of his family, than an artist has the right to use his talent for such low ends. Every capacity and talent a man possesses is held in trust for the community; he is a steward of the bounty of God, and it is his duty as well as privilege to share it with his fellows, who are endowed, if at all, with other capacities.

And what is true in industry is true in government. Rulers ought to be men expert in the twin political sciences of government and economics. But how often do we see our popular representatives proving themselves to be only 'politicians,' skillful declaimers, men anxious to secure honors and benefits for their constituencies, or for 'interests' which have underwritten their careers! No man liveth unto himself; and the man who would live *for* himself alone is not only damning himself to spiritual sterility, he is betraying nature's trust. Genius exists only for the good of the race; and even the humblest talent has its impersonal end to serve.

We confess that we do not see this principle, as yet, writ large in the pages of our national life. Fairly recent occurrences within our recollection prove that it has not yet been adopted. Earlier still, during World War I, while our men by thousands were in France giving all that life held for them, with no hope of private return or advantage, and even life itself, in order that justice might triumph; while men here at home were giving their services without stint that America might do her full duty, and in the measure of her strength

save the world for democracy: at this very time we were actually permitting other men to reap huge profits from the war, to accumulate ill-gotten fortunes, to buy houses and lands and needless luxuries out of their fabulous profits—and we said practically nothing in protest.

The accumulation of such fortunes ought never to be permitted. Whatever profits the war allowed belong to no individuals but to society: in a more perfectly ordered democracy they might have gone to alleviate the suffering caused by the war, or at least into public funds to meet the overwhelming expense it occasioned, to compensate in some trifling measure for its colossal waste. Such fortunes can never bless their possessors or inheritors: they are the price of blood. All honor to those who have seen and followed the way which reason, even more than charity, dictated, and freely contributed their profits to the public good: but if only our moral sense, as a nation, required such contributions as a matter of course! In such a time, no man has the right to say, "The profits are mine, my own private property; let other men likewise take their chance and prosper even as I." The moral sense of mankind in the future will doubtless fashion laws taking over to the common good the profits of national defense, artillery, and armament-manufacture, and the sale of foodstuffs. But the moral common-sense of mankind can be immensely aroused and led forward by the courageous and unselfish actions of individuals. If not the nation, through its recognized channels of legislation, then certainly righteousness—God—calls for such renunciation of special privilege.

This will be only one instance of the general working in society, and in the midst of the situation of modern society, of the principles of the New Morality—which is yet the revival of the old, almost the very oldest in our civilization, viz. the Christian: renunciation of special privilege by the individual for the sake of the common good; the sharing, by

the strong, of their strength with the weak; the sacrifice of individual comfort and security for the sake of social gain. The war has brought out the social issues which these principles alone can solve, as no other upheaval could have done. It has shaken the very foundations of our civilization. The merely decorative and artificial supports cracked and gave way: they were discovered to be fashioned of plaster and clay, not granite and steel. It may be generations before the full social effects of the war have been realized. But certainly our own generation cannot put off the task of rebuilding some of the foundations of society with material better than once was used. Men who toil shoulder to shoulder, who sweat and die for freedom, are not likely to identify the object of their efforts with the merely comfortable and self-satisfying scheme of things which once passed for civilization. When our ship is in danger, safety is a better thing than comfort: the captain's cabin is now no more desirable than the stoker's bunk. Covetousness is the sin of desiring to hold in possession both cabin and bunk, or two bunks when one will suffice. But it is no time for covetousness, any more than for the search for comfort. Such covetousness is sheer idiocy, when the ship has sprung a leak or struck a mine. What men who really see the situation today demand is not more personal advantage, but more social good. Unless the ship can be saved, all our possessions and privileges, our emoluments and incomes, our stocks and various 'securities' will be no further use to us, but will either sink to perdition and oblivion or become flotsam and jetsam on the dreary waste of waters. And, today, as men recognize on all hands, our ship is really in danger.

We may take another example, still fresh in the minds of us all. The whole world has recently passed through a period of economic and industrial depression. Not the least of its effects were felt in America. For twelve years we had flattered ourselves that we were prosperous beyond the dreams of

Croesus, that the gold reserves in our bank-vaults, the war-bonds and notes of the debtor nations of the world in our national strong-boxes, the high wages of our workingmen, the protective tariff we had erected at our frontiers, the steadily accumulating unfilled orders at our factories, the abundant harvests of a prodigally fertile soil—that all this so safeguarded our prosperity that nothing could ever disturb our self-sufficiency. A spirit of bullish speculation and adventure swept over us. Fortunes were made on the market. Clerks grew wealthy on the curb at lunch-time. No one dreamed that our national bubble could burst—until we awoke to the realization that fortunes had been lost, that factories were idle, and that millions of men were out of work. Nature was still prolific—no famine or natural disaster had overtaken us. Millions upon millions of bushels of wheat were stored up, with no sales, and the lowest price in all our history acceptable but not offered.—What was wrong with us? Was our depression self-inflicted, or did we merely blunder into it, by tampering foolishly with economic laws? And has religion, has the Church, anything to offer in such a crisis—any practical bearing upon the situation and its problem?

Now in all honesty we reply, Yes, and No. For it is no function of the Church to devise ways and means of economic stabilization; but no plan or scheme, so far as we can see, will ever work successfully until men's motives are changed, until selfish profit-taking, in high quarters and in low, gives way to the habit of unselfishness and the motive of service; until men talented with leadership come to care more for their country and the social good than for private gains at the expense of others; until America, and every nation, learns that to live unto itself is to die; until, in fine, we learn that the Gospel of Christ is after all the simplest and most practical of cures.—And this is where 'religion comes in.'

The second World War has been won—but for what? And in what sense won? And can we be sure it has been won permanently? It may have been won in four bitter years, and be lost again in another ten. It may have been won in a welter of blood and pain, and be lost in anaesthesia and without struggle. Social anaesthesia is our greatest danger. There are men who refuse to yield up consciousness, like Christ on the cross when he rejected the merciful potion of wine and myrrh, and prefer to keep their heads above the stream come whatsoever torment or agony. Feeling, the sense of what takes place, the sympathy with all that suffers, is the first step toward the new day for civilization. Such men can be saviors of their race, in the degree that they continue to feel, to realize, to be conscious of the wrongs about them. They are called to share the saviorhood of the Man on the Cross. It is not by theories that mankind is to be saved, nor by ideals alone. Utopian economics will remain forever utopian, unless men, called of heaven to be leaders of their kind, possess also feeling for injustice, for oppression, for the despair which injustice and oppression lead to—often unconsciously and unintentionally, and as mere chance disadvantages in the mechanism of production and distribution; and unless they keep their heads high above the lethal flood. It is not prophets only that are wanted, but men of sympathy and understanding to sense the chasm between the newly visioned order and the order here and now. Perhaps—who can tell?—if our prophets turn 'social engineers,' and more of our men of practical affairs, of industry, commerce, and government, statesmen and politicians, catch some view of the vision splendid, something may even be done to end war itself, with all its horrors. For the sympathy and understanding required cannot stop short of other nations and indeed all mankind.

And this is where religion comes in. For religion—I speak now of the Christian religion—cultivates feeling. Nietzsche

and his school are right: Christianity thrives on emotions, of a certain kind! To the degree in which the Christian feeling of sympathy, the Christian sensitiveness to evil, to sin, to intolerable injustice, is aroused and cultivated, the new order will advance. It is advancing, today as never before. Men do not simply see; they feel, and see because they feel, the wrongs which exist in the world. It may be mere blind groping, or it may be readiness to understand the words of prophet and seer; at any rate this is the force by which men make their greatest progress. For centuries we have had visions of Utopia; but not until now have men felt that a Utopia of some kind is a *necessity*, and the next step to be taken is a step nearer the ideal. Browning voiced the prayer of our age—no rationalistic economic creed, but a prayer of intensest feeling:

Make no more giants, God, but elevate the race!

But how can the men of talent, or even of sound mind, be expected to sympathize with such a movement, for example, as Communism? And why should religion be expected to favor madness?

It would seem to be axiomatic that if people are hungry, they must be fed. There is no higher law than human need. Christ made this clear in his controversy with the Pharisees when they accused his disciples of 'threshing' grain on the Sabbath as they passed through the grainfields, plucked off the heads, rubbed out the kernels and began to eat. He said to them, "Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he and they that were with him? How he entered even into the house of God in the days when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him" (Mark ii. 23-26). But blind, stupid, angry destructiveness can be tolerated neither by common-sense nor by religion. No amount of provocation can explain,

to thrifty people, the stupidity of waste in the name of freedom. No doubt the Russian peasantry were more sinned against than sinning. Yet violence, bloodshed, arson, pillage, the destruction of foodstuffs and domestic animals, merit only the disgusted reprobation of the whole world. Between violent revolution and total war there is little choice.

It is obvious that Christianity does not mean violence on one hand, nor tyranny on the other, nor a supine policy of *laisser faire;* nothing short of universal justice can satisfy the requirements of religion in social life. But to despair of justice in social relations, simply because of the violence of oppressed populations, as many good and orthodox Christians do today, is to imply no less than to say: "God is God everywhere else than in human society. He rules in the inner, 'spiritual' life of men; He is to be found in the Church, and in pious homes; but He cannot control human society." To recognize that He does not actually reign in human society at the present time, is only the recognition of a fact: but to despair of His reign among men, and to assume the impossibility of the future realization of His ideal reign, is really to make Him a half-god, like the deities of ancient paganism. He is an inventor who cannot master the machine He has made, a world-maker overcome by his own world. This is practical atheism. We do not expect Christianity to favor a particular political party, democratic, royalist, or revolutionary. But we do look to it for social justice. This is the large function of religion in society.

§ iv

We are learning today to recognize what 'capital' is; heretofore we have generally misunderstood the term, as commonly stated in the antithesis of 'capital' and 'labor.' We see now that it is something more than invested fortune, cartloads of

gold and silver specie rented out to supply the mills of industry and set them grinding. Capital is not money, merely; it is the equivalent of human toil. Every dollar, every bank-note represents a certain amount of toil. The billions of money that are in existence would have no value whatsoever if everyone in the world stopped working. Just as the heat-values of food are spoken of in terms of calories, weight in tons, distance in miles, so the values in human toil are represented in dollars. Hence we can understand the reluctance of many men to go on helping in the accumulation of masses of unused (or non-productively used) capital, at the cost of a part of their own life's labor. To them, as they view the situation, it means working an hour, or two hours, or five hours, each day simply to accumulate more capital belonging to someone else; and the rest of the day's toil is for themselves, their wives and children. As well put in those hours one day in moving piles of sand, and the next day in moving them back again! Neither the personal benefit nor the social benefit of such toil appear to exist. It is wholly to the advantage of persons who happen to possess the initial stock of capital; and with enough of that to begin with, they do not need more. A surplus is menacing to society. This is the way in which increasing numbers of our contemporaries reason; and a mere appeal to the *status quo ante*, the usage of the past, will not set such reasoning at rest.

The radicals and reformers who object to 'capital' or 'capitalism' are often misunderstood: often enough through their own failure to define the terms. Capital, of course, is absolutely necessary for economic life, production, exchange, compensation. It is not capital, as such, that is wrong; it is *unused* capital, or capital which represents waste, inutility, extravagance, and non-social expenditure. It would seem to follow then that the use of capital, all of it, for social and unselfish ends, for the good of all, is to be the salvation of modern

economic life. If it is not so used voluntarily, by those now in possession of it, it will doubtless in time be confiscated, not—let us hope—by one class turning upon the other and impoverishing or annihilating it, but through new powers of the State. We already recognize the appearance of such powers in the State: and they are surely destined to increase in the future. For the margins of economic existence are becoming too narrow for human safety—between what the world produces and markets 'profitably' and what the world needs, between enough and famine. It is thus not altogether the devil's sin of envy which motivates the demands of labor, as many persons of wealth suppose! It is at least with us nothing more nor less than the old and ingrained American-British habit of freedom, in thought, in action, in making a livelihood, and in the pursuit of happiness. The 'spirit of '76,' the spirit of the barons under King John, the very spirit which has given birth to democracy in Anglo-Saxondom; the spirit which serves the State but insists also that the State serve the people: it is this and not envy or covetousness which is swelling the tide of demand for social reform and economic reconstruction. Such a spirit is in the end destined to be invincible, whatever the outcome of particular efforts or remedies proposed. If men will obey this spirit, and respond to its guidance; if they will help their fellows to intelligent coöperation to secure its ends, then they will be doing their part in their generation toward the achievement of God's ends and purposes in the world.

For this spirit is religious as well as social. It is holy, as from God Himself, who is the God of Justice. He is leading men into all the truth, and preparing them for His Kingdom here on earth. Thus the social bearing of religion is far wider than the religious institution, the Church. It reaches out to embrace all mankind.

But is not the religious ordering of society bound to be

narrow and unprogressive? Is it not identical with a polity of theocracy, like the ancient Jewish, or the New England Puritan, or, let us say, that of Zion City in Illinois? If religion means life controlled by the consciousness of God, will not a religious social order mean the life of society controlled by that consciousness of God possessed by the majority, or perhaps that of a few leading spirits? Will it not be so exclusively religious as to kill out other interests, such as the arts and sciences, philosophy, music—or even economics? It is significant that the ancient theocracies discouraged art, as infringing on the divine prerogatives of creation, and as encouraging idolatry.

But the answer is, Not necessarily. It depends upon the kind of religion which the majority—or the leading spirits—hold. This may be narrow, or it may be broad. The narrowing-down of human interests to religion and its immediate ancillae —worship, dogma, discipline, and so on—in the past, resulted from the peculiar type of religion which was found in the old theocracies, Jewish and Christian. But it is not a theocracy which the Church contemplates when it speaks of applying the principles of Christianity to society. The broad, free, ethical religion of Jesus has never yet been applied generally to society. The religion of the Puritan theocracy was more Hebraic and legalistic than Christian and evangelical. It remains to be seen whether or not the religion of Jesus and the social principles of the Gospel are narrowing or not when applied in full to human life.

We would not expect them to be so. For Christianity—the religion of the Gospel, at least—does not come under the category of the older religions, which might be defined as the performing of certain duties or rites which ensure the salvation of the individual or tribe. On this definition, the Christianity of the Gospel is hardly to be called a religion: it is rather a new way of life, a discovery of the way to fulness

of life, the key to a higher and more abundant life. That is in brief what it is: not religion, but Life! And if this free, ethical, God-attached newness of life which Christ brought to the inner soul of our race is something which cannot be extended to the social life of mankind without narrowing it, we greatly mistake.

How then can it be extended? By living in society in such a way as becomes citizens of the Kingdom of God. In Parthia or in Gaul, the Roman was still a citizen of the Capital of the Empire. 'In the world, though not of it'—yet loving your brother whom you have seen, and daily do see, with the same intensity and fervor and self-forgetfulness with which you love God whom you have not seen: this was the way in which St. John formulated the basic social principle of the Gospel. "This is the commandment which we have of him, that he who loves God love his brother also!"

And it is even more vital than this. For the religion of the Gospel, which is really more than 'fifty-percent ethical,' cannot be practiced save in a social situation. The hermit has turned his back upon the greatest of the promises of God. The religion which places the Beatitudes in its very forefront, along with the parables of the Good Samaritan and of Dives and Lazarus; whose message is the Gospel of a Kingdom; the religion which sums up all the requirements of the divine law in two great commandments of love to God and love to one's neighbor—this religion means more and not less of life for humanity, means breadth and abundance, not narrowness and penury of spirit. On its banner might be inscribed not only *In Hoc Signo Vinces,* but also, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." Today, *vexilla regis prodeunt!* "The royal banners go forward," conquering in this name.

## CHAPTER XII

# *Religion and Immortality*

Is IMMORTALITY DESIRABLE? It would seem that to ask this question is to answer it: there can be no doubt that it is desirable, even supremely so. Men in all ages have desired it, and men today desire it likewise—whatever our academic discussions of the problem assume. The savage ate of the tree of life, drank of the water of life, feasted upon the flesh of a sacred animal, hoping to gain thereby the strength required for a long life, and to put off the day of death. The ancient kings built great sepulchres and monuments, to preserve their memory on earth. The old Hebrew asked nothing better than a numerous family of descendants, to preserve his name among men after he was gone, so that he might, in a sense, live on in his posterity. Human nature abhors the notion of extinction as physical nature 'abhors a vacuum'; and if men are unable to rise to belief in their own personal immortality, they yearn for the next-best boon, continual remembrance. In the midst of a world of change, where nothing continues in one stay, they find a real difficulty in dealing with the thought of their own annihilation. Almost every religion which men have professed proves this fact.

## § i

But what *kind* of immortality do men seek? It was at first nothing more nor less than the continuance of this present life, in all its circumstances and conditions; or, if the present life was unhappy, they wished for an immortality which

should compensate for the sorrows and sufferings and disappointments here. This was how the Jews came to believe in immortality, as the Old Testament shows. The view is summarized in a verse of one of the Psalms:

> He asked life of Thee,
> And Thou gavest him a long life;
> Even forever and ever (Psalm xxi. 4).

It was at first a thoroughly 'this-worldly' salvation that was hoped for with little hope of 'immortality' in the later sense:

> Return, O Lord, deliver my soul;
> Save me for thy loving-kindness' sake
> (Psalm vi. 4)

> For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheôl;
> Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see
> corruption (Psalm xvi. 10).

> But God will redeem my soul from the
> hand of Sheôl;
> For he will receive me (Psalm xlix. 15).

Men yearned for (*a*) a long life—it was one of the greatest blessings man could enjoy; and they yearned for (*b*) a life in which the limitations and hindrances, the pains and disappointments, of this life should be forever done away by a complete reversal of conditions—evil and pain and misfortune should have no place in that life.

The early Hebrew and the early Greek conceptions of life after death have much in common. The departed are in Sheôl, or Hades, a region of darkness, of shadows; where souls live in a kind of half-animation, remote from human society and outside the sphere of divine control.

> The dead praise not Thee,
> Neither all they that go down into the pit . . .
> The living, the living, he shall praise Thee!
> (Psalm cxv. 17. Cf. Isaiah xxxviii. 10-20).

A single day of life on the earth was better than ten years in the land of the departed. Like Homer's hero, they would rather be slaves upon earth than reign in the realm of the dead. But men could not continue permanently to hold such a gloomy faith. Such a faith proves the difficulty which men experience in conceiving extinction: it could not quite be conceived—men stopped short of the idea of utter annihilation: and this is what it was, the *all-but-extinct* life of the underworld. But with the higher hope which the rise of a nobler conception of God brought to the Jews—as One who could not allow a region of human life and experience to remain outside His power and care—they began to look for a coming Messiah, and for an 'age to come' in this world which should bring to the faithful length of days and the reversal of the untoward conditions of present earthly life. This also we find in the Old Testament, alongside the older and indeed primitive notion of the underworld of the dead.

Thus it was no philosophical induction from the facts of life which gave rise to this hope. Rather, it surged up from the hearts of men, from their instinctive and irrational moods; it contradicted, even though it was not overwhelmed by, the facts of experience and observation; for it was essentially a feeling, an 'intuition,' not an idea—it had to be so, for men were not able to conceive of anything else!

Right here, I cannot but believe, is the very strongest argument—if argument we need—for immortality: on certain levels of moral life, and in certain situations, *the soul of man demands it*. We are conscious of a life whose deepest needs can never be satisfied in this world. The mind, the heart, the soul, the whole higher and better nature of man is no more than fairly begun in its development here in this world. It is impossible that death, the mere breaking down of the physical machine, the more or less accidental failing of the flesh, the loss of a body composed of certain chemical elements in a

particular proportion and combination—it is impossible that the loss of this should mean the destruction of all the higher, better, nobler, more God-like features of a human life.

I frankly recognize that this is an argument which may not appeal to every person. It may impress some as, after all, abstruse and philosophical. It is weakened by the recognition of the obvious fact that other good things in this universe are only fairly started in their development and then are snapped off short. Even Milton had to make room in Limbo for 'the unaccomplished things of nature.' We all know good causes which have been thwarted by unforeseen accidents: the mistake of some minor individual, the bell-boy or the hero's second-cousin, spoils the anticipated dénouement of the plot. But there are some of us who can say that, for our part, it is by no means an abstruse and philosophical idea; it is an intense conviction, a living reality to the mind. There are some of us who can look back to the very day, in youth, when the conviction first took hold of us; and it has never left us for an hour since. We look abroad upon the world and we see change and variation everywhere; but we are conscious of something which is relatively unchanging and permanent, an identity which persists through all variety and change. We look forward to a task or a career of some sort; we have a plan which we are impelled to follow out; and then it dawns upon us that three-score years and ten, or even a decade or two more, by good fortune, are wholly insufficient for the working out of the plan, for the accomplishment of all that we hope and dream. We need more room. Our little sphere is too small. At the same time we are fully convinced that the plan is worth more than the means by which we have hoped to accomplish it! We cannot weigh this earthly life against the high ends for whose realization it makes so thoroughly insufficient a provision. We ourselves count for more more than tiny units in a vast, impersonal

world-process. We instinctively demand immortality; or, at least, we demand a larger sphere of operations than we find here and now.[1]

But in demanding, or desiring, immortality, *what is it that is desired?* We turn now quite away from the Old Testament, with its vague hopes of a shadowy after-life, or of numerous progeny to perpetuate one's family and name, to modern life, to modern men and women, with their explicit hopes and longings.

*Is it simply continuity?* Is it merely the projection of an individual's lifetime on beyond the allotted three-score and ten years? I do not think so. For if this were all, then a kind of life like that of the mythical patriarchs of old would suffice. To be like Methuselah, with a record of nine hundred and sixty-nine years, or Mahalel, Lamech, or Adam, would be quite enough. Dean Swift, in his description of the Struldbrugs, satirized the ambitions of certain persons of his time who aspired to such longevity: the mere projection of bodily existence on into an indefinite future, with all the infirmities and disabilities of advancing age multiplied ten-fold! If the infirmities and limitations of this life are to continue, immortality is not so desirable, after all, as it might seem! [2]

*Or is it happiness that men ask?* The best example of a religion in which the hope of a happy future life has been made central is no doubt Mohammedanism. The Prophet explicitly promised his dusky warriors of the desert that if they would engage in battle for the true faith, and die fighting the enemies of Allah and his Prophet, Paradise would assuredly be theirs. And Paradise was pictured in no uncertain form, or with pale and fading colors. The promised pleasures of the flesh, the anticipated satisfaction of the senses, gave it a compelling vividness and reality for his famished troops. 'Paradise' indeed it was: a garden of shade and flowers, of heavenly aromas and sweet music, of fountains and palms,

with food and wine served in abundance by houris of ravishing beauty—an illimitable oasis of delight lying just beyond the horizon of the hot and thirsty desert.

Perhaps we may compare with this some of the pictures of Heaven which Christians in other ages have drawn: for example, the Heavenly City, new Jerusalem, in the Apocalypse of John, which is only a popular Jewish conception of bliss taken over and modified, retouched by Christian hands. Or we may think of the mediaeval picture of heaven, as in the hymns of St. Bernard; it is based upon the vision of St. John in the Apocalypse, with certain added touches by which the mediaeval saint somewhat 'modernized' the dream. But what a difference there is between the early Jewish-apocalyptic and Mohammedan conceptions of bliss, and those of the majority of Christian writers! There is in the latter no bloodthirsty desire to behold the torture of one's enemies, or the enemies of his religion; there is no place left for the satisfactions of mere sense, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' We are not now arguing for the superiority of the Christian conception; for all three are more or less continuous and related: the early Jewish gave way to the later Jewish conception, the later Jewish entered into the Christian; and the Mohammedan is largely a caricature of debased early Christian and Jewish ideas. But, generally speaking, in the Christian picture of bliss, the conception is more chaste, the details are more withdrawn; all rests secure upon a higher level. And the reason for this is more than merely asceticism, otherworldliness, the ideal of the monk and recluse: there was a motive here, new in history, genuinely Christian, and going back to Christ himself and the purer type of Jewish religion in his days.

There is a story which is told of St. Bernard himself, who, when he was but a child, entered the monastery school at Cluny. The brothers were talking one evening about heaven,

and one was asking another what he expected most to enjoy there. One said, "To see the throne, and behold the Lamb." Another, "To behold the light of that fair city, as it is said, 'There is no lamp there, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth it light.'" Then they turned to Bernard and one asked, "Little son, what do you desire most in heaven?" At once the child replied, "To wait upon God: for it is said, 'His servants shall serve Him.'"—There is the secret of the Christian dream of eternal bliss, even as seen in luxuriously imaginative writings of the middle ages: "His servants serve Him." The *pleasure* desired is no satisfaction of the senses, but the profound yet humble longing of the Christian soul to do service, to minister, to wait upon God and do His will.

It is not mere continuity of life; no mere pleasure or happiness; not even a compensation for the injustices and cruelties of this present world, that makes immortality desirable: *it is God Himself who is the desire of our hearts.* "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" (Psalm xlii. 2). "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God" (*Ib.*, xlii. 1). It is not even life that men want, when they have entered this high realm of communion with the Eternal; or if it is life, it is life only as the condition required for the enjoyment of such bliss: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." It is God Himself, the Living, the True, in whom alone we can find our rest, our home, our everlasting satisfaction. As Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself; therefore our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

Here is the highest level of religious aspiration thus far attained in man's religious experience. He no longer desires length of days; nor the satisfactions of the senses, nor of any earthly desires; not pleasure, nor the rewards of painful virtue

and rectitude and self-denial; not even a compensation for losses sustained upon earth in serving God, obeying His will, 'keeping His laws which He set before us.' In simple fact it is something beyond all these: it is God Himself that is desired, in all His holiness and beauty, His majesty and truth and love, His ineffable goodness and glory. "My God, if I have but Thee, I ask not after things in heaven or earth" (Psalm lxxiii. 25, in Martin Luther's translation). "Whom have I on the earth to desire in comparison of Thee?"—"For too little," said St. Augustine again,[3] "doth he love Thee who loves anything with Thee, which he loveth not for Thee. O Love, who ever burnest and never consumest! O Charity, my God, kindle me! . . . Give me what Thou enjoinest, and enjoin what Thou wilt." Perhaps even more clearly is this motive expressed in the celebrated hymn of St. Francis Xavier:

My God, I love Thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby;
Nor yet because if I love not,
I must forever die. . . .

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!

E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my Eternal King.[4]

Is immortality desirable?—Only if it has a content, a meaning, which gives it sufficient value. For the mere quantitative projection of this present life on into future ages—retaining the old conditions, limitations, circumstances—would be worthless. It would be just as painful as the Hindu cycle of births and rebirths, working out the endless chain of Karma,

forever encompassed and ensnared in the world of 'Maya,' illusion, appearance. No wonder the soul cries out—even at the very contemplation of such a fate, not yet experiencing it—for Nirvana, release, absorption into the Divine, loss of personality, of feeling, will, and consciousness! For that which gives *value* to immortality, and supplies it with meaning and content, purpose and hope, is nothing less than contact with God, aspiration toward Him, love for Him, knowledge of Him, the experience of His gentleness and love, of His mercy and holiness and truth: in a word, it is communion with the Everlasting One that gives value to the hope. Immortality is desirable to modern minds only as a means to this end. There must be a value in life to make it *worth* eternity.

§ ii

As a matter of fact, this is how men came to believe in an immortality higher than mere survival. When life itself had acquired a value which men could not believe was merely transitory and ephemeral; when the existing human soul and its imagined survival after death were given a content—drawn from communion with God—altogether too precious to be blotted out, then men came to believe in and earnestly to desire their own personal immortality. It was no theory of a soul-stuff or psychic element naturally indestructible, a spiritual 'substance' akin to that of the Divine 'nature' which led to this belief; it was the feeling that life was too good, too worth-while, to be allowed to perish, since communion with God was attainable. This is equally as true of Christianity as it is of earlier religious which taught a life after death. It is no religion of natural immortality, of the immortality of every soul by virtue of its bare existence. It does not deny the theory, but ignores it. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any positive indication of the purely natural

immortality of the soul; but everywhere we find the hope and assurance of resurrection and salvation for those who have laid down their lives for God, for Christ, for righteousness, or who are mystically or sacramentally identified with the Risen Christ. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"; "he that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne"; in each case the promise is conditional.

> In the common experience of our race, we do not find anything that can be called the natural immortality of the soul, except that neutral and meaningless continuance of its existence represented by Hades and Sheôl; whenever there is real immortality, a continuance of existence which has meaning for us now, and by which death is overcome and deprived of its finality, it is *morally conditioned*. It may be a doom, or an achievement, but it belongs to the moral, not to the physical world. Ideas like that of the indestructibility of the soul have never been factors of faith in immortality in any real sense. They have never functioned in real life so as to beget such faith. If they had, we might talk of natural or unconditional immortality; but so far as we know historically, positive and significant faith in immortality has always been conditioned in such ways as have been described. Just as no one can know the meaning of good or evil except by taking part in the life of a moral world, so no one can know whether man is what we mean by immortal or not except by entering into the experiences in which men have been assured of the incomparable value of personality, and have felt themselves summoned to a life in view of which all transitory things lost their reality and their value at once.[5]

Whether or not it is true of immortality itself, it is certainly true of *faith* in immortality, that it is ethically conditioned. He who would save his life shall lose it, while he that loses it 'for my sake' (i.e. for the highest spiritual, non-selfish end) shall save it. It is the man who counts not his life dear unto himself who finds it to be dear enough unto God to be saved. It is the man careless of his own safety for the good of others and in the serving of their highest interests who discovers that

his safety—or his final salvation, in theological language—is the concern of God, that he is preserved alive for God's further purposes—not as private reward, merely, but for the sake of those eternally valuable ends with which he has identified himself: "Himself from God he cannot free." Religion can never prove the immortality of the soul to a man determined not to believe in it, or whose moral outlook leaves it meaningless; it can only supply experiences and the view of life which makes the faith in immortality natural, reasonable, and necessary. It is not the 'immortality of the soul' in general that the Christian religion advances or presupposes; it is the survival, unto life eternal, of specific souls or persons—though it by no means countenances the limitation of this class to an elect few, leaving others to perish.

We see this the more clearly when we observe that, historically, faith in immortality and martyrdom have gone hand in hand. It was so in the period when this faith first took strong root in the Jewish religion—the period of religious persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. That vain and tyrannical Graeco-Syrian monarch—'mad' rather than 'illustrious' (Epimanes, not Epiphanes), as Polybius said—undertook to root out the Jewish religion, and to force upon its adherents the adoption of the syncretistic polytheism of the surrounding Graeco-Oriental civilization. The rites and customs of the Law were proscribed. The mere possession of a copy of the sacred Book was punishable with death. As the climax of ignominy, a pig—sacred to Greeks, but unclean in the eyes of Jews—was offered upon the high altar of the Temple in Jerusalem. But the Jews were firm in refusing to submit to the destruction of their religion. Martyrdom became common. Blood flowed in the streets of the city and in the villages of Judah. And it was at this time (c. 167 B.C.) that the Book of Daniel was written (or at least its latter half), predicting the frustration of the tyrant's efforts, the end of the persecution,

and eventually—what interests us chiefly here—the recompense of those who have lost their lives in the struggle. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."—'The wise' were those who resisted, even unto death, the commandments of the earthly king. 'They that turn many to righteousness' were those who had persuaded their neighbors to remain steadfast under persecution, or, if already apostate, to repent before it was too late. It is confidently assumed by the seer that the victory will be won, that the tyrant will be discomfited. But up to the present —the time of writing—the victory has not actually taken place. And meanwhile men have laid down their lives. They are lost, gone and vanished; yet they have laid down their lives for the cause of God, and in order that justice and religion might triumph. What is there for them, therefore? Are they to go unrewarded, when it was their sacrifices which were making the triumph possible? Under these circumstances only one answer could be given: 'In the sight of the unwise they seemed to perish,' and their hope to be but naught. Yet God had reserved for them such good things as passed understanding, namely a future life upon earth, by resurrection; and, indeed, a future life which should be everlasting.[6]

We may take a more recent instance. The men who retreated at Dunkerque, who died at Stalingrad, at El Alamein, at Salerno, made possible the victory of today. If it had not been for their heroic self-sacrifice, the war might have been lost there and then. And yet, when they died, victory seemed very remote. They were apparently fighting a losing battle, for a lost cause. Like the martyrs in the days of the Maccabees and the Book of Daniel, they died when victory appeared impossible; and yet they died to make it possible!—

It may possibly be easy to die when victory is near at hand, when a man's life counts, when he can feel the scales tip as he throws his weight into the balance. But what if victory is far away, or apparently hopeless?—We too are sure that justice demands some compensation, some recognition, some share in the victory when it comes. God cannot be so unfair as to refuse this recognition and share to men whose deaths actually won the triumph of His cause! They must, somehow, be there at the victory!—But we are not sure that death is 'easy,' even with victory near at hand. If triumph is in sight, men naturally desire to share it. We keenly feel the injustice meted out to the men who died in battle on the very eve of the final victory. Small consolation that they suffered no more injustice than the men who died earlier in the war! Ideally, it is cruel injustice that anyone should die, in order to restrain military aggressors in their madness. And we justly feel that some nobler compensation is due them all—since they died for the victory they never saw. If there be justice at all in the universe, they *must* see and share the triumph! Victory, somehow and somewhere, eternal victory must be theirs!

It is as true of self-sacrifice for spiritual and moral integrity in civil life as it is for self-sacrifice in the pursuit of military duty. We recognize this, for example, in the case of Socrates. "I had a singular feeling," Plato makes Phaedo say, who was present in Socrates' death-chamber, "at being in his company. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend; and therefore I did not pity him, Echecrates: his mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed. I thought that in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him, as might have seemed natural at such an hour." [7] There is no tragedy here, since neither of the twin feelings of pity and terror is

aroused. And there is no *finale*. We are sure that Socrates passes through death and beyond, out of this world into larger life.

And it was thus with the death of Jesus. We do not stop short with a sense of horrible injustice; for the injustice vanishes before His triumphant, confident self-committal. Nor do we pity Him: for He is beyond our pity; he asks it not for he knows what he is doing, and he accepts death willingly. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." He too, like Socrates, pushed aside death's terror; and it is inconceivable that either of them should be pitied, for we should then suspect that their confidence was mistaken. Any man of firm and unyielding determination might defy death, even for a false and mistaken cause, and brush aside its terrors, making our pity unnecessary; hundreds of men have done so, scorning our weak commiseration. But it is the *character* of Socrates, and of Jesus, which carries conviction of their victory over death. They are perfectly sane; their vision is wholly clear; we know that theirs is no mad act of defiance, to be followed by some sad awakening from delusion. They have arrived at death as no new experience; they have already conquered it in spirit. And if this is true of the characters of Socrates and Jesus, then it is certainly true of others, who show in some degree this same character; for we cannot draw a narrow circle about them and say, These, and these only, possess a nobleness of character worthy to carry conviction, for themselves and others, of life to come.

Plato's greatest argument for immortality, in the Dialogue called *Phaedo*, is not dialectic but artistic—we might even call it humanistic—as Denney said, it is the *character* of Socrates.[8] In the presence of such a man, death seems more than ever incongruous and out of place. If the heroes of barbaric or semi-civilized ages could not be thought of by

their contemporaries as annihilated by death, how much less such a man as Socrates? And if Socrates made this impression upon his followers, or upon Plato's readers, Jesus certainly made it upon the disciples. The old Jewish sense of propriety, expressed in one of the Psalms, comes naturally to utterance upon the Apostles' lips: "Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy One to see corruption" (Acts ii. 24, 27, 31). There is certainly force in the argument (of 'natural immortality') that if the soul, the highest thing in nature, goes for naught, then the whole universe is only a colossal example of futility, of wasted energy, of unaccomplished design, and of frustrated purpose. But when, instead of 'the soul' we say 'Jesus' or 'Socrates,' the futility and meaninglessness becomes almost inconceivable!

It is the achievement of moral or spiritual character, then, which gives meaning to our notion of life after death, and makes immortality desirable; and it is likewise moral or spiritual character which carries conviction of its permanent reality, and of the necessity of its continuity, now in this present life. Such faith, as we saw, is wholly ethically conditioned. Once more, a man must 'do the will if he would know the doctrine.'

How *can* a man believe in immortality who has invested his whole being in things which perish as he uses them? How can he believe in immortality if he does not know something which is better than life, if he is not identified with a cause and an interest to which life itself may well be surrendered? He cannot do it. He cannot evade the conditions under which the faith in immortality, as true religion knows it, was born, and by which it is sustained, and still believe. The man who has nothing in life he would die for has nothing in life worth living for; and the life which is not worth living will never believe in its own immortality. A great moral possession, like faith in immortality, must always be bought with a great moral price; a man must sell all that he has to buy it. What Plato said long ago about the materialists who grasped rocks and oaks as the only realities—that they required to be improved before they could be argued with—may be said

without censoriousness of many who doubt immortality today. As it appears in the history of the true religion, faith in immortality is part of a development in which an intimate experience of God's love is responded to by an unreserved surrender of the life to Him, and there is no reality in thinking or speaking of it apart from these conditions. What is implied about the soul, or about human nature, by the fact that experiences like these are possible for it, is an ulterior question; but no doctrine of the soul will do the soul justice which does not argue back from these experiences; and no metaphysical doctrine of the soul can ever be demonstrated *a priori* which will enable us to deduce these experiences from it. Every discussion of immortality, to be real, must move in a world which is ethically and experimentally conditioned throughout.[9]

We have grown almost accustomed to hearing 'the will to believe' discussed, chiefly in connection with immortality—pointing out the truth that to live *as if* immortality were true brings greater happiness, a richer moral content to life, and results in the growth of a conviction that somehow, whether we can prove it or not, whether we can even conceive it or not, immortality must be true. But there is a grave defect in this argument. As if anyone could 'will to believe' what he does not, on grounds of reason or probability, accept as valid and true! Far more salutary is it to discuss, in Dean Inge's phrase, the *right* to believe so august and life-transforming a doctrine as eternal life. It is a conviction that must be won. Such a faith is not an acquisition but an achievement, not an addition to one's general stock of beliefs but a moral victory!

§ iii

When we say that the highest spiritual religion does not assume the natural immortality of the soul, we mean, particularly, that it does not take this for granted in the way, let us say, that it takes for granted the freedom of the will. For this is a basic principle, and without it religion is impossible;

but immortality is an added boon, a conclusion rather than an assumption. Even on the all but primitive level of the earliest religions, it is conferred by some extra-natural power or agency—as the eating of the fruit of a sacred tree, partaking of a sacred meal, or sharing somehow in a divine life, mystically or sacramentally mediated. That is to say, as a matter of historical fact, religion has always thus viewed immortality —even while the higher religions stimulate desires within the soul of man which nothing short of a deathless existence can either satisfy or explain.

And in fact it is difficult to find any reason for assuming the soul of man to be naturally immortal unless, even in what the older theology called its 'natural state' (i.e. before divine grace had begun to effect its transformation), we are to think of the soul as destined for immortality because sharing the life of God. The sense in which a soul 'shares the life of God,' while living outside conscious communion with Him, or when acting in opposition to His will, and striving for ends which all the wideness of His mercy—as we conceive it—is not sufficient to cover and sanction, would be somewhat attenuated and difficult to imagine. Such 'sharing' in the divine life would seem to be something almost material and physical; it lies under that very charge under which all primitive historical religion labors, namely, of conceiving the soul, the deity, and the spiritual life as material or physical in essence.

Up to a certain point, Naturalism no doubt holds good. And we do not quite see why man in general, just *as man*, should be immortal, any more than simians should be immortal, or any other of the lower orders. Strictly speaking, I may even say that I can see no reason in nature why *I* should be immortal: my little life is too incomparably insignificant. Millions of other such persons exist at this moment, and already countless millions upon millions of others like me have lived and died. The race, as a race, is only one species in

nature, striving collectively toward certain ends, more or less achieving them, modifying its environment somewhat; why the members of this one species should be immortal, and not apes or dogs, or meadowlarks, is, we admit, somewhat difficult to see. We may even grant that man is the highest species in nature; by superior cunning and courage, he has overcome the other animal species, cut down the forests, altered the vegetation of the earth, cultivated, domesticated, cross-bred or exterminated the lower species until today he is master of the physical creation. But is this, the skeptic inquires, sufficient reason for assuming that man is entitled to step off the earth and join the immortal gods? A million or more years ago, there were creatures upon this earth who topped the stage of development thus far attained, and who were entitled in a measure to look down upon the lower creation, even as we do today. In their saurian age, they were masters of the physical world. Were they immortal, then? Such arguments are not to be bowed out of court; and on the basis of a doctrine of 'natural immortality' it is difficult to escape the dilemmas they present. What is required is a more satisfactory conception of the real grounds of belief in a future life.

Unless my life can somehow be *raised above itself*, lifted out of the train of mechanical succession and of biological sequence by which nature has produced it; unless it can somehow be united directly to the Supreme Energy and Life which created and controls the whole; unless I can in some real sense share the 'spiritual' life of God, I must admit I see no urgent cause for considering myself immortal. Taken by itself—as one tiny unit in an ever-evolving universe—my little life does not require to be immortal. Numberless petty immortalities like my own would only needlessly encumber the world; while the perpetuation of countless *animae hominum*, with their volitions set at cross-purposes to the one supreme will of God, would needlessly complicate the world-process.

Nature takes no more account of individuals or of species who defy her than a nation at war stops to weigh the rights and wrongs of treason. Unless I exist for the end which God is seeking to achieve, and unless my continued existence is somehow required for the achievement of that end; unless my loyalty to this divine purpose is unquestionable, I feel no compelling sense of justice in demanding my own survival. Obviously, such an 'end' must be spiritual—for immortality can play no part in the material scheme of nature. Obviously, also, 'loyalty' must involve harmony of wills with the divine will, lest a perpetuation of 'cross-purposes' destroy the unity of that universe in which 'God shall be all in all.' To make me immortal, merely because I wish to be immortal, would be as foolish as it is uncalled-for. Do the north wind or the polar blast spare the timber wolf, just because he is hungry and can find no shelter? Or does the wolf spare his prey because it wants to live? Only a spiritual end, not-myself, greater than I am and altogether outside 'me,' makes reasonable my personal survival beyond the natural stage in which I now fulfill in some degree my role and part.

Unless, in brief, my immortality is a thing useful and worthwhile, an added value to the universe, a part of its total value to Him who is its *Valor valorum*—as Dante held; unless I can be of still further service to His ends, I see no reason at all why I should live forever. If I am more valuable alive than extinct, then no doubt I shall continue to live. But if I am of no further use—to God, or in His creative process—then I should expect to be as extinct as a last year's gnat, or the grass blades browned in the sun. Only if my continued existence is to some purpose; if my good-will to any degree heightens the general good-will of men here or hereafter; if I may be said to share in any measure—even the slightest—in the creative activity of God; then, and then only, can I hope for immortality.

And in order to share in God's creative work, it is first necessary that I share God's moral character. Before I can help forward the ends of the divine toil, I must share the divine purpose and aims, the divine character, the divine outlook upon the universe of life. This does not mean that I must possess infinite intelligence, or eternal wisdom, or intelligence and wisdom of a supernatural order, like the secret lore of the ancient mysteries which was supposed to confer upon their votaries the gift of immortality; but it means that I must have a goodness like in kind to that of God; that I must love truth and hate iniquity, as He does. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." This is the only immortality I can conceive; and it is the only kind I desire. For true immortality is more than endless length of days, or even consummate happiness; it means nothing less than sharing the very mind and inner life of God. Undeniably, this involves a moral character, far more than it implies length of days or even indefinite survival. I must be *like* God to share His life, and become 'partaker of the divine nature.' Indeed, length of days—or the persistence of finite personality—is *almost* a negligible element in this conception; for to share in God's life is something vastly higher and better; and the idea of the former remains now only because the latter embraces it within its larger whole.[10]

§ iv

But belief in immortality cannot remain a sentiment or feeling only; we must be able to think it out, to some extent, to form some definite conception of it and answer the questions to which such a hope naturally gives rise. The first question that meets us is this: How is it possible for finite beings like ourselves, born in time and subject to its limitations in all our thinking, in all our conscious life, to become sharers

in the life of an *eternal* Being? Can we do other than imagine, with the pantheist and the mystic, and the absolute idealist, an existence in which all that marks us off as individuals, everything finite in personality, is obliterated, and we are merged into the colorless, non-particular Infinite and Eternal? —All that marks the finite and the particular, the Many in contrast to the One, is now done away: we are all one in God, as drops of rain are lost in the vast waters of the ocean.

But, let us protest, it is not God's eternity that we are talking about—that, we take wholly for granted—what I mean is *my* immortality; and these particulars and traits called 'finite' are just what make me myself: remove them and you undo me. My own personal and distinct existence *is* finite and particular; and with the loss of all that is finite and particular, *I* likewise am lost, quite hopelessly and irrevocably. It is not the reabsorption of the 'God-in-me' back into the 'God-in-Himself' that I call my immortality. If I am a being who can look forward to immortality only on such terms as these, then every sense I possess belies me; quite properly I should be urged to turn back through Maya, Illusion, to the peace of Nirvana, to the annihilation of the separate self!

Probably no answer is possible to this question, how a finite personality can be immortal, until philosophy has satisfactorily expounded the relation of the Finite to the Infinite, of Variety and Multiplicity to Unity, of the Many to the One. Unfortunately, it is doubtful if any philosopher, from Plato down, has ever fully mastered this transcendent problem. Yet, so concrete and unacademic is this question that thoughtful persons can scarcely avoid its consideration. And if we cannot discover the complete answer, we may at least think in the direction of the complete answer, in the direction in which it may possibly some day be found, if men persevere long enough!

In the first place, Eternity is not Time prolonged, any more than Infinity is an endless extension of space, or the sum of an inconceivable number of integral units. Perhaps as nearly as we can come to a definition may be to say that it represents endless extension, or the result of endless extension—and unceasing addition after the extension and addition have ceased!—a conception to which Time is fundamental, after all. But this is contradiction: when the extension stops extending, when the process ceases to proceed, it becomes nothing at all, a mere what-has-been. Only Life, not Time or Extension, conveys to our minds a likely image of the significance of Eternity—Life, whose essential nature appears to be spiritual and not material at all. In Plato's language, it is 'the moving image of eternity.'

Eternity, therefore, is not to be thought of as Time prolonged, but as the condition under which God exists, the Lord of Life, even as we—and the other physical manifestations of life—exist in Time. It is clear, also, that Eternity must embrace Time—not Time, by its 'endless extension' embrace, or equal, Eternity. And since it is the condition under which God exists—(though it is not a condition existing outside Himself; any more than consciousness, the condition under which we exist, is a condition imposed upon us from without)—as the condition under which God exists, it must be true that God exists both in Time and Eternity. We are doubly assured of this, for our theoretical reasoning is met by the practical and irrefutable fact of consciousness: God is known under forms of Space and Time. We know God, we who are creatures of Time, because God enters into Time also. For He is present here and now, as well as yonder, being both within and outside the sequence of causation in which we live. He is not only 'the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity'; He is here and now, a God near at hand, involved in the affairs of this world, 'keeping watch above His own.'

There are no hard and fast categories, like bushels for apples and potatoes; Eternity includes Time, but Time can give us Eternity, which breaks through the interstices, so to speak, and soaks through its porous walls. Eternity includes Time, as Time 'includes' — i.e. makes possible — Memory, which is almost wholly unlimited by immediate sequence, and skips back and forth, leaping over decades with the lightness of a squirrel; and Imagination, whereby the mind sweeps over centuries and millennia with the same agility and speed; and spiritual experience or Ecstasy, the high, immediate sense of God, 'crowding eternity into an hour.' Memory and Imagination and the Spiritual Consciousness are limited by sequence, of course, as the squirrel is 'limited' by the law of gravitation. But they are also free; memory and imagination are superior to any necessity of *living* over what is thought over, recollected or imagined. And certainly, God, as the Highest Consciousness, possesses at least this capacity; more likely, His powers are such that, by comparison, our mental and spiritual processes are only the faintest and crudest copies. If God can exist thus *both* in Time and in Eternity—in some manner like but transcendently superior to the human processes of Memory and Imagination; so that, e.g., what are only remembered images for us are presented as realities to Him—then very likely here is our bridge across the chasm; and it is He who can lead us out of Time into Eternity, through union with Himself, through our sharing in His life, His character, His purposes; so that as He exists in Time as well as in Eternity, so we shall exist in Eternity as well as in Time.

## § v

Immortality can never be *proved* in this life—whose final logic must ever be experience; hence it must always remain a matter of faith. The literal immortality of one soul is all

that any of us could expect, at best, to prove. And the proof of such immortality would be possible only by the actual experience of an immortal life. Survival after death might conceivably be demonstrated: the evidence for this the Society for Psychical Research is steadily engaged in examining. But the actual, literal deathlessness of the soul is, after all—even granting the validity of such proofs—not covered thereby; it remains as before an inference, to be made valid only by faith.

But what of the resurrection of Jesus? Did he not 'bring life and immortality to light'? Yes, it is true; but as the New Testament writer fully and accurately adds, he brought 'life and immortality to light *through the Gospel*,' not through the scientific proof of the soul's incapability of dying. The Gospel is not identical with a spiritualist 'demonstration'; the Christian religion was not founded upon the philosophical dogma of the immortality of the soul; the Resurrection means only, strictly taken, the survival of Jesus.

The evidence for his survival, the 'proofs of the resurrection,' are quite sufficient to assure us of the reality of the disciples' experience of His presence after the crucifixion. There is just as much historical evidence, it has been said, for his resurrection as for his death; perhaps even more evidence! For, beyond all else, a religion was founded upon the fact of his appearance to the disciples after his crucifixion and burial; but none was founded upon the fact of his death. The death alone would have been meaningless, disgraceful, incomprehensible. The crucifixion derives its whole significance in Christian eyes from the events which soon succeeded it; indeed, one might say that without the Resurrection, the crucifixion would probably never have been recorded; nor would the Gospel have been preached; nor would there ever have been drawn the awful and yet attractive picture of graciousness and power, tenderness and dynamic energy, which repre-

sents Jesus in the early traditions. So much for the historical significance of the Resurrection!

But even granting the unquestionable fact of the appearance of Jesus after his physical death and burial, it will be said that it proves no more nor less than the survival of Jesus. Our own survival, or the immortality of the soul, or the Lordship of Christ in the Church and in the Cosmos, is simply an inference. Such inferences, we are told, are similar in quality and possess neither more nor less of validity than those which the early Christians drew from it, viz. the impending end of the age, Jesus' approaching return in Messianic glory to hold the Last Judgment, and—by a retroactive conclusion—the Messianic character of his earlier life upon earth, before his crucifixion. Yet the abundance and variety of the inferences possible from this fact cannot be held to overcloud the fact itself. Such a fact might be expected to throw light in several directions at once, and to become the premise of a number of inferences. We might expect, too, that the longer men lived with this fact before them, the wider and truer would become their inferences. They would see more implied in it, as time went on, and inference would rise behind inference like mountain-peaks as the mist fades away.

We need not hesitate to say that here is enough for us to go upon—in this one fact, which at once becomes cardinal for our outlook. We do not require a scientific demonstration of the immortality of each individual soul; who is there who should be in a position to examine even an infinitesimal portion of the evidence? Nor need we ask for a conclusive proof of our own individual immortality; for unless our lives are worth perpetuation, unless we are in some sense worthy of survival and immortal life, we should scarcely welcome the cool demonstration of our own incapacity for death. Hell would hold out no allurements for us, in spite of Huxley's saying. Certainly the everlasting permanence and continuity

of a life not worth projecting beyond this narrow sphere of time and sense, the guinea-stamp of eternity upon a coin of base alloy or a tinsel dummy—if the contemplation of such a future as one's own individual fate be not the experience of Hell, it is very nigh thereunto! Again, it is a supremely significant fact that the one particular and chosen individual, whose survival of death has been demonstrated, was Jesus and no one else. If it had been the survival of Judas, or his resurrection three days after he hanged himself, or even that of Peter or Paul; or of Socrates, or Shakespeare, or Savonarola—the fact could scarcely have made the difference in moral and spiritual history that Jesus' survival—and the belief in Jesus' survival—has made.

For one thing, we know—at least the masses of us know—far more thoroughly than we know the convictions of any other in whom we place even a relative degree of confidence, what were his ultimate convictions on the subject of human life and conduct, and of our relation to God and to our fellow-men; he is, first of all, our Teacher of ethics and religion. For another thing, we do not know anyone who realized so fully in his personal life the ideal character which as a teacher he taught in the Gospel: he is more than a teacher, he is the proof and demonstration of his own ideal. Again, we know no one who flung away with such utter recklessness whatever stood in his way, or might tempt him to turn aside from the path of obedience and suffering and seek to achieve his ends by the arm of flesh, political power, or popular influence; he is God's True Servant. Here was the one Man whom we discover to have been completely transparent in motive, simple as a child in conduct, utterly unselfish, and utterly unflinching in his supreme sacrifice for what he recognized to be the way of the Lord. And since immortality is the concern of religion more than of science or philosophy; since it affects the whole of life and not merely

certain of its interests, there is a vital significance in the fact that it was *Jesus*—not Socrates or Aristotle or any other, but Jesus—the supreme religious genius of the human race, who more than any other staked his all upon God, who 'rose immortal from the grave,' who is 'alive forevermore,' and hath 'the keys of death and of Hades.' Whatever inferences we wish to draw from this fact, now, we feel to be perfectly safe —for we know who Jesus was and is, no mythical Savior-God or legendary Hero, but a man who lived and died for God; who is God, not by the conclusion of a metaphysical argument, but in the intensity of his personal being.

The first inference that we draw, affecting our own personal destiny, is this: if it was Jesus who, we believe, survived death, then those who are *like* Jesus (or who are mystically united to him, and 'in Christ,' as the New Testament describes them) are more likely to win immortality than those who have no share in his motives, purposes, or character. The way of escape from death is not the secret of the few; it is not held by the possessors of some holy rite; there must be achieved an actual likeness to Christ, if man is to be assured of his immortality. Can any one individual person be sure of his likeness to Christ? Is there not a danger of false assurance?—There is. But this danger is not great enough to deter anyone really in earnest, who is convinced that it is Jesus and no one else, who holds 'the keys of death and of Hades'; and who can save us—through an imitation of his character, through following him as an example and guide, through identifying our purposes and motives with his—who can save us from death and extinction.

It is not a theological or philosophical—or a scientific—principle with which we are here dealing, but it is one of the simplest and most powerful of human instincts, that of imitation. And the motive is thoroughly sound and trustworthy in this instance. If one man fords a river which a hundred before

him have failed to cross, or are not known to have crossed, it is only common-sense, if we wish to reach the other side, to follow in his steps, and not try to cross where others have failed! If Jesus conquered death, then—since we too wish to conquer—we will follow Jesus. The attitude of surly independence which refuses any guidance in such a situation is allied to stupidity and folly. For it is not immortality as an inherent attribute of the soul, as soul: a kind of 'indestructibility of matter' applied to soul-substance; nor is it the 'general resurrection,' which is demonstrated by Jesus' survival. It is the survival of One who yielded himself in utter life-long obedience to the Father's will, who made no effort to save his own life, but fully gave it for the sake of God and the world, who found it again in Resurrection. And if Jesus has 'risen from the dead,' then it is they who sacrifice themselves unselfishly in God's service, laying down their lives, their ambitions, their selfish desires, that God may triumph—it is they who have 'hope of a life to come.'

But even more than this. For if Christ died and rose again from the dead, then death's power, the dark spell which its very name has cast over men's hearts from the beginning of the human race, is broken, and men may be set free 'in Christ.' This means, in the New Testament, something more than release from the fear of death. Death itself, in the realistic imagery of early Christian thought, has lost its power. Christ has bound the strong man, has broken the bars of his castle, has set free the prisoners in his dungeon. Henceforth, as the consequence of this act, Jesus has the authority and the power to set all men free. And this is what Christianity, as the religion founded upon the fact of Jesus' resurrection, sets about to do for men in anticipation—to free them from the fear of death, since Jesus is able to set men free from death itself. If any man wills to live a life worthy of continuance after death, let him behold what the character of that life is, as seen in

Jesus. And if a man will live a life like that of Jesus and in union with his Master, let him follow closely in Jesus' footsteps, let him identify his motives with Christ's, his purposes with Christ's, his character with Christ's. "I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too," said Mr. Stand-fast.

## CHAPTER XIII

## *Have the Questions Been Answered?*

We have been discussing one of the most permanent of all activities of the human soul. Its place is so great in life that no man will voluntarily resign his share in it. There is a note of sadness in most men's confession—when they do feel the necessity of confessing it—that they have been unable to grasp the religious point of view and act accordingly. They realize that they have lost something, which to other men is most precious and satisfying. They would fain possess it; they long, secretly, for its satisfactions, for the assurance which it brings, for the gripping convictions which it inspires. The compartment-idea of life is now fully abandoned on every hand. There is no special area of life which may be labelled 'religious,' separate and distinct from all the rest. Religion runs through the whole of life, giving it a power and significance which nothing else can supply. It has to do with life itself, not merely with certain of its expressions. Its experience creates the background against which the activities of life have meaning, like the light object necessary for reading an X-ray plate. It is even more like the chemical treatment which brings out upon the plate the lights and shadows which make it recognizable. So vitally necessary is religion that it can never be argued down, or injured by violence, or destroyed by disbelief. As long as men think and feel, as long as they are human beings, they will be religious, and there will be religion.

We have not attempted to advocate one religion in preference to another, though certainly there must be one which is better than all others. But we have taken for granted that most

of us know more about Christianity than any other. For us, religion means Christianity. As has already been said, if we are to be religious men at all, we will be Christians almost necessarily. We cannot relinquish our inheritance. And moreover we believe that Christianity is the religion which contains the best that is to be found in all others, and hence is to be, before many more generations have passed, the world-religion. The history of Christianity, we are coming to see, did not begin with Judaism, merely; it began with Confucianism and Stoicism as well, and with all religions and moralities in human history. And though it is often asserted that modern culture is non-religious, since art and education and even morality have slipped from the hands of the Church, we do not believe that this is permanently true. Men are incurably religious; and secular phases are only transitional. Before long, religion and morality, religion and education, religion and the esthetic sense, will meet and unite once more. Religion is too vitally necessary to be left at one side in the progress of the race.

We have not attempted to discuss religious doctrines, save as they affect religious practice. No doubt there is a value in particular doctrines as parts of a larger system in which men have thought out their religious experience, impressive in its coherence as a fitly compacted whole, and expressing—as we find it in Christianity—the world-outlook of the past in magnificent terms. But today, that system has largely broken up. Here a part (say the notion of absoluteness as it was once applied to God), there a part (say the juridical conception of the work of Christ), has been removed, and the system lacks that completeness which the Aristotelian schoolmen of the middle ages gave to it, and which enabled it to stand, with all the impressiveness of a vast and finished cathedral, before the admiring gaze of at least five centuries, from Aquinas to the Illumination. But when we speak of doctrine or in terms of doctrine, today, it is not the whole objective system, founded

upon ecclesiastical authority and safeguarded by decrees of councils or the consensus of ancient witnesses, to which we make appeal: rather we take doctrine as expressing value for human life. Doctrine was the historical expression of this value which men found, a value for daily living, for moral conduct, for devotion, for piety, for mystical communion with God, with Christ and with the other world. And if we too discover that value—as we certainly do—it is only natural to express it in the terminology of ancient doctrine. The Atonement, the Incarnation, the Trinity and Infinity of God: all these are conceptions in reality passing our understanding, and beyond imagining in their totality. But they are efforts to convey, in reasonable terms, something of the value for human life which men found—and still find—in Christ and in God. This is the manner in which we have tried to explain to certain of our contemporaries, into whose hands this book may fall, the way in which Christian men today—not scorning to be modern, but aware of a wider and wiser whole in life than modernity taken alone represents—think of their creed and view its relation to their practice.

Though men may be able to delay working out the full theological implications of whatever simple creed they hold (as, for example, the Christian: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ, His only Son . . . and in the Holy Spirit"), yet they cannot very well delay to grasp firmly the idea of God—as Supreme, as Good, as Holy. The consciousness of God which is fundamental to religion requires that our intellectual idea of Him shall not be vague, shadowy, and changing. Religion may do without a fully formulated theology. Most religious men do, in fact, get along with a minimum of theology. But religion cannot do without an idea as well as a consciousness of God: for the consciousness demands its intellectual expression or equivalent.

We are confident that the idea of God which is here ad-

vanced, as not simply Sovereign but also Free, as Sovereign, yet Self-limited by His own freedom of Will, answers more perfectly to the consciousness of God which modern religious men share than the idea of absolute and unlimited Sovereignty which our fathers held. And it is nearer to the idea implicit in Christian faith, that of a God who becomes Incarnate.

Hence certain of the problems which our fathers' idea of God left unsolved—as insoluble, from their point of view—either do not arise today, or, if they arise, are not found to be insoluble. Such is, for example, the old struggle between the notions of determinism and freedom; or the ancient dilemma of theology, "Is right right because God wills it? Or does God will it because it is right?" This may be supposed to be chiefly of academic interest; yet it has puzzled many minds not versed in philosophy. It can be solved only by belief in the Freedom of God. Both questions may then be answered affirmatively: Right is right because God wills it: because what He wills is not contrary to His own nature, which is righteous. And He wills to remain true to Himself (though conceivably He might will otherwise), not because it is Himself, but because it is right: because His own nature is righteous and good. What is the highest good for us is the highest good for Him also: this is the great ethical significance of God's self-manifestation in the Incarnation.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect!" The subtle unity of God and man which is here taken for granted is equalled only by the quality of freedom, in God and in man, which it also presupposes.

We believe that the questions, stated at the beginning of this book, have been answered. (1) Religion must reckon with morality: it does so, for it includes morality, and supplies a power for the solution of problems which morality uncovers and yet leaves unsolved—problems of performance and of practice, rather than of speculation. (2) Religion must reckon

with a world of law and order, of energy and mechanism: it does so, but it puts us in touch with the Supreme Power and Intelligence who is working with and through this vast contrivance of energy and mechanism, bringing it slowly and gradually nearer to a purposed End, a spiritual Goal; it links up our human purposes with the majestic purposes of God, our wills with His will, our intelligence with His; and life acquires meaning in consequence. (3) Religion must reckon with the whole of life; its goods cannot be isolated from the general good, it cannot live in a compartment by itself, remote from culture and from social aspiration, unrelated to the strivings of all humankind. And this reckoning it does undertake; for if it be rightly understood and recognized in its widest bearings, it embraces life in its entirety. The Christian religion is one proof of this: our civilization, for all its faults and shortcomings, is mainly the product of ancient human instincts interacting with the spiritual and ethical interests of the Christian Church, and in increasing measure under the control of the latter.

If only that control were complete, with a Church adequate to its task of interpreting and exemplifying these ideas, with spiritual and ethical interests dominating all social life, bringing every thought and deed into subjection to the spirit of Christ, what a world this might be! Here lies the task of the present and the future; and it calls upon every one of us, in the measure of the faith that is in him, to contribute his honest best through the downright and consistent practice of religion.

# *Notes*

## INTRODUCTION

[1] See my *New Horizons of the Christian Faith*, 1928, pp. 244 ff.

[2] See the *Report* of the Lambeth Conference, 1930, pp. 17 ff., "The Encyclical Letter."

[3] See A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 1925.

[4] The 'supernatural,' even in the Catholic sense, is by no means limited to the physical world, to events that are not immediately explicable in terms of 'natural law' whether popularly or scientifically conceived. It is the moral and spiritual realm or order of Grace, supervenient upon the natural order, rather than any succession of 'miraculous' events. For example, one act of pure self-sacrifice is quite as 'supernatural' as any of the recognized miracles of biblical and ecclesiastical history.—See further F. von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. i, 1921, ch. 11, 'Christianity and the Supernatural.'

[5] *Outspoken Essays*, First Series, 1919, pp. 28 f.

[6] And I may add, as a personal *confessio fidei*, it seems to me that the traditional conception of Christianity, i.e., the conception of Christianity as the religion of the historic Church, affords ample room and scope within its wide embrace for the most varied types and expressions of the spiritual life. Without requiring—or countenancing—the separation of sects, the ideal of the 'Great Church,' as Adolph Harnack called it, essentially is and ever should remain inclusive enough to safeguard the exercise (within proper and socially wholesome limits) of the most various types of spiritual liberty. 'Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all.' On the other hand, a 'Catholic' or universal Christian church that exemplifies the rigidity and exclusiveness of what Ernst Troeltsch called the 'sect type' is a contradiction in terms. Speaking for myself, I find the nearest approach to this ideal of free and comprehensive, and yet positive and historical, Catholicism expressed in the Churches of the Anglican Communion; where, nevertheless, it is still imperfectly expressed, and has still some way to go. See my *New Horizons of the Christian Faith*, ch. viii.

## CHAPTER III

[1] Epictetus, *Discourses*, i. 6.

[2] Ib. 14.

## CHAPTER IV

[1] Epictetus, *Discourses*, iii. 3.

[2] Caird, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 1884, p. 284.

[3] Caird, *ib.*, p. 276.

## CHAPTER V

[1] It is certainly not necessary first of all to work out a satisfactory theory of the 'two natures' of Christ in order to be a Christian or a believer in Christ's divinity. What is required is a recognition of the supreme worth, the uniqueness, of his character and person in the moral and religious sphere. A man may not be able to get any farther in definition than this, and may have to pray to whatever it is in Christ that makes him what he is! Nevertheless, this is *practical* faith in his divine nature, and it has the values for life that are referred to above. On the other hand, an abstruse, academic Christology, out of touch with the spiritual and moral life of men, is a pure travesty of the Christian faith, no matter how 'orthodox' it may superficially appear to be.

[2] The only one, at any rate, which recognizes the actual and objective existence of the physical universe. Pure Idealism is a 'closed' system, but it does not recognize the genuine reality of matter.

[3] This is not to assume that the present world-order with all its evil is the perfectly satisfactory expression of the Mind or Nature of God. No one will suppose that the evil in the world is a disproof of the existence of moral law.

[4] This solves the scholastic and practical problem, whether goodness and right are good and right because God wills them to be so, or because they are so in nature. The answer is, *both*. God's nature is good (what we call good); and God wills the good, i.e. wills to be true to Himself. If God willed otherwise, our 'good' would cease to exist.

[5] As the underlying motive of early Christian 'eschatology' was that God is *to be* King, but is now conquering the evils in the world, so the symbol of God's presence, and warfare, in the world, and of His future victory, is Christ. The Christian symbol of 'God in the world, reconciling it unto Himself,' is Christ upon the cross—'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame,' 'and triumphed over death.' God sees the end from the beginning, the ultimate victory on beyond present defeat; and He toils on toward that goal. Even a non-believer will recognize that the world has seized upon this symbol as a high embodiment of truth. Christ's conflict with the demons, Christ's victory over death itself, shows God not outside the universe but actually within it, involved in its struggle: 'God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' The Incarnation has a significance nothing short of *cosmic*.

[6] The conception of the Absolute was the final product of Greek philosophy, working on the data of observation and with the help of such science as men possessed. So the earliest Greek philosophers had sought for one final substratum or *physis of existence* (fire, air, motion, etc.). They worked, also, on the data of religion; the Absolute was the Supreme Being of religion as well as of science and observation (the study of phenomena). It was the natural result of the quest for *unity* in a field dominated by heterogeneity and contradiction (mythology). But it remained essentially a philosophic product, even in the sphere of religion—as we see in Neoplatonism. Men could hardly have won release from mythology and its confusion save by some such process of thought. So much for the historical value of the doctrine.

But was it the whole truth? Was it satisfactory in the fifth century before

Christ, or in the fourth century after him, not to mention later times?—It makes God impersonal, as a rule, and inconceivable. On the other hand, 'What relief the plain, matter-of-fact Gospel must have brought men in a world where nothing throve like these cities in the clouds [of Greek speculation], would be inconceivable, if we did not know its value still' (T. R. Glover, *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, p. 145). The Christian religion is not a philosophy, though philosophy may throw much light upon it and help to unfold its meaning for human life. Yet not exhaustively—and certainly not by capturing its ethos and 'fundamental ideas' in the net of the philosophical Absolute. For Christianity is primarily an experience, not an idea or set of ideas—and it stands among the freshest, deepest, most inexhaustible facts of life with which philosophy deals.

[7] A. J. Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, Gifford Lectures, 1914, pp. 20–21.

## CHAPTER VI

[1] The old objection to the Christian theology of atonement, 'Why could not God have spared His Son, and saved mankind in some other way, as might Jove on Olympus, by a nod?' presupposes that God might easily revoke not only the right of choice in men but also the same right in Himself, by refusing to adhere to His own course, once it was chosen, if obstacles later arose in His way. This would not be God at all, Christian or other! Such a God would be capricious and unreliable, and we should be compelled to imagine, with the ancient heretic Marcion, a second and greater God who might assume the tutelage of this irresponsible deity, and safeguard the affairs of the universe until He had reached years of discretion! Such a heresy needs no ecclesiastical condemnation: it condemns itself.

[2] *Apologia*, p. 3.

[3] A profound bit of religious philosophy may be extracted from the early Christian *Epistle of Barnabas*, according to which the divine Day of Rest (from the toil of creating: Genesis ii) is not the Jewish seventh day, the Sabbath, but the Christian *eighth* day, Sunday, and represents not this world but the world to come!

[4] One wonders why 'Rest, rest; you have all eternity to work in,' would not be equally sound advice!

## CHAPTER VIII

[1] See A. C. McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians*.

[2] In some respects, of which the present is one, they may be spoken of as the same religion.

[3] *Theism and Humanism*, p. 37.

[4] See N. P. Williams' Bampton Lectures, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*, 1927.

## CHAPTER IX

[1] Tennyson, 'The Ancient Sage.'

[2] Rufus Jones, 'Quietism,' in the *Harvard Theological Review*, x. 19.

[3] R. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[4] Cf. W. Major Scott, *Aspects of Christian Mysticism*, pp. 130, 106 f.

[5] There is certainly this much of truth in Pluralism: different spheres of possible *experience* co-exist and intersect in the same world! There are also different spheres or cycles of the interpretation of experience possible in the same world, and each may be true as far as it goes. William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, has given the classic exposition of this viewpoint. (See my *New Horizons*, ch. iv.)

The remarkable thing about Jesus is that he seemed to move freely in so many 'spheres,' to be familiar with and to speak with the authority of first-hand knowledge upon so many different 'levels' of human experience. We cannot classify him in any hard and fast category; for he speaks to us all in our own language—the mystic, the ecclesiastic, the poet, the reformer, the statesman, the ethical philosopher, the practical man, the ascetic and the devotee.

[6] Charles Kingsley, *Hypatia*, p. 435 (ch. xxvii).

## CHAPTER X

[1] E. Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*, p. 56.

## CHAPTER XI

[1] See, once more, Balfour's *Gifford Lectures* on the absence of survival value in the esthetic and moral senses.

## CHAPTER XII

[1] Note the similar psychological fact of the mind's increasing independence of bodily limitations. See Hadfield, 'The Mind and the Brain,' in B. H. Streeter, ed., *Immortality*.

[2] *Gulliver's Travels*, iii. 10.

[3] *Confessions*, x. 40, Pusey's translation.

[4] Tr. Edw. Caswall.

[5] James Denney, *Factors of Faith in Immortality*, pp. 21–23. This is one of the finest essays ever written upon the subject.

[6] In the later Alexandrine Jewish work, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, a more spiritual view of immortality than that of the Palestinian Book of Daniel is advanced; but the *religious* presuppositions remain the same.

[7] Plato, *Phaedo* 118.

[8] Or, as Jowett said, Plato is more certain of Socrates' immortality than he is of the arguments he advances to prove it.

[9] Denney, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 ff.

[10] I have elaborated this argument in a book entitled, *Can We Still Believe in Immortality?* (Cloister Press, 1944).

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